

**‘Black Children in a White School’: Language Ideology and Identity  
in a Desegregated South African Primary School**

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## Declaration

I, the undersigned, Pinky B Makoe, declare that this thesis was authored by me under the supervision of Dr Catherine Wallace, and is entirely my own work.

Signed:  .....

The total word count is 82 065 words (exclusive of abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, appendices and bibliography).

## Abstract

This thesis is an account of a qualitative study, which set out to investigate how black multilingual children in their first year of formal schooling are socialised into the cultural practices, particularly the English language practices, and ethos at a former white English medium school in South Africa. This study is interdisciplinary drawing on social theories and poststructuralist epistemology to explore the relationship between ideology, language/knowledge practices and identity. In particular, I consider the discursive construction of English as legitimate language, while other forms of representation are viewed as 'abnormal'.

Set in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the study was located in a desegregated primary school in a suburban area of Johannesburg. Data was collected using ethnographic methods and drawing on the traditions of school ethnography. Qualitative data collection methods included non-participant observation, video recordings of classroom interactions, audio recordings of interviews, and learners' tasks. Forms of discourse analysis, blending approaches from sociology, education and applied linguistics, are used to analyse social interaction as a discursive site where resources are validated and marginalised, and as a site of identity construction.

Bourdieu's notions of linguistic capital, linguistic markets and linguistic habitus inform my analysis. The analysis will also be located in Foucault's work, which sets out the constitutive forces, and discursive practices by which identities are constructed and negotiated within institutional contexts. The study reveals that proficiency in English, and access to specific cultural practices associated with English, enables learners with those resources to claim certain identity positions while those who do not have access to them become disadvantaged and marginalised. Despite the linguistically diverse nature of the institution, the school practices, discourse and ethos work toward monolingualism. I argue that the value and legitimacy attached to English plays a significant role in how black multilingual children in year one of schooling imagine themselves as members of this community. Through making visible, the ideological practices and assimilationist activities, especially with regard to dominant language/knowledge, this study hopes to raise questions of inequality and social justice in a society in transformation.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Finally, words are inadequate to express my thanks to my mother, Motshedisi Makoe, for her support and encouragement throughout this endeavour. My debt to my family and friends is incalculable. I thank them for their unfailing support and for not letting me give up.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Abel Tshalanki Makoe, who passed away during the time of my PhD study.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: Framing the Question**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This study is concerned with early learning and schooling in post-apartheid South Africa focusing on the relationship between language ideologies, discourses and identity construction in multilingual settings. A key aim of this thesis is to look at what is happening in multilingual school classrooms with a particular emphasis on the question of power relations and inequality in education. To date, research on primary education in South Africa has tended to mainly focus on multiple modes of communication and representation and how these modes can be utilised as meaning making resources in literacy learning. However, these studies do not address the socio-political, the cultural and the historical circumstances of production specifically with reference to the issue of the dynamics of power in a society with a profound legacy of social inequality; and where education in the apartheid era was abused to legitimise the domination of those in power. Thus my intention is to show that the practices of institutions such as school are inherently interested and situated, and serve the ideological function to privilege English over other knowledge as well as perpetuate unequal social relations. I will develop this discussion later in this chapter.

The research is located in a previously white school in a suburban area of Johannesburg which now caters for a predominantly black population of children. The study looks at moment by moment classroom interactions in order to show the kinds of institutional and cultural practices that emerge in year one of school. I begin this chapter by locating the study in the changing context of a post-apartheid South Africa focusing particularly on early schooling and English in education. I outline my research questions and my research aims explaining how these came about within the research context. Finally, I introduce social theories and post-structural conceptualisations on language and identity as my theoretical lens to show how this thesis will engage with the questions of power and inequality in desegregated schooling in South Africa.



## 1.2 The Study and Its Overall Aim

It is important to highlight at the outset that I use 'Black children in a White school' as a construction to capture the general socialisation and ideological processes in an urban racially desegregated English-medium school. In particular, how young black children in their first year of formal education are apprenticed into the hegemonic cultural ethos, that is, the linguistic culture and identity of the school. How does access to these English linguistic resources and lack thereof 'mutate' into different forms of inequalities in this school? This is an important question in this thesis; it foregrounds issues of institutional ideology that serve to regulate social practice, such as what counts as linguistic capital, and ways in which power is constructed through language and in interaction. My main contention is that schooling, albeit benignly intended to provide equal opportunity to all, stratifies children's experiences, therefore reproducing social patterns of domination and subordination through (value-laden) enculturation tools including language, discourses, power relations, governance and administrative structures. Thus, I argue that despite the different racial, linguistic and cultural make-up, children are 'schooled' and 'ritualized' into the *status quo* of the institution, resonating with practices that are still very much in the past when it was 'wholly' white. As shall become clear in Chapter 2, whilst educational legislation and policies promote diversity, assimilationist experiences and practices in racially desegregated schools continue. By assimilation here, I refer to a largely homogenising process in which learners become immersed in dominating cultural and language practices, and consequently have to adapt and adopt these institutionally 'legitimate' ways of speaking and ways of presenting oneself.

It is impossible to fully contextualise the South African situation without using the racial terminology developed and used in the apartheid era. As Carrim and Soudien (1999) put it:

'Race' influenced the *material* conditions of people's lives in explicit and direct ways, ensuring that South Africans lived segregated and unequal lives in almost every sense of the terms. Given these conditions and history, South Africans are not in a position to ignore 'race'. It is central to any understanding of South Africa, even in its current juncture' (p.155, emphasis in original).

The four categories I use in the thesis are Black, White, Coloured and Indian. For complex historical reasons, and clarity of description I have used the term 'Black',

instead of 'African' in most instances. Following the South African usage, I use the descriptor 'Black' here to refer generally to non-white South Africans who were disenfranchised during the decades of apartheid rule. However, where I discuss specific historically constituted identities related to racial categories I will need to distinguish between 'Coloureds' and 'Indians' and 'Africans'. 'Coloureds' are those people of racially mixed heritage and 'Indians' are those of Asian descent. Here 'White' is used to indicate South Africans who are historically European. Although the terminology endures in the new South Africa, I do not support the use of this racial classification but use it because it reflects the racial categories that underscored apartheid policies. Note that the names of these categories however were never stable as they were constantly changed; 'Indians' became 'Asians' at one point and 'Africans' classified successively as 'Natives', 'Bantus', and 'African'.

Scholarly literature in post-apartheid South Africa is replete with investigations of schooling and identity, with specific focus on race and racism in desegregated schools, or Model C<sup>1</sup> as they were historically defined (for example, Carrim, 2003; Dolby, 1999, 2001; Nkomo *et al*, 2004; Ntshakala, 1997; Soudien, 2004; Vally and Dalamba, 1999) - see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion. An overview of the findings of this research points to assimilationist school policies and practices in desegregated public schools, leading to experiences of alienation for black learners in these former white, Indian and coloured schools. Accordingly, Soudien (2004, p.104) argues that 'assimilation is overwhelmingly hegemonic as a practice of integration in schools'. It appears that 'conceptions of difference, and hence the education policies from which these derive, continue to be framed in the hegemonic but unproblematised vocabulary of race' with an obvious neglect of other 'embedded inequalities which flow from class, culture, gender, religious and language disparities' (Soudien, 1998, p.126). The research mentioned above has been and continues to be important in understanding the dominant structural reality of learners within these schools. That is, there are subtle or covert forms of racism that characterise learner experiences in these institutions. A major gap in such literature, however, is that it makes scant reference to classroom-based research, and it predominantly focuses on secondary school education. As valuable as this line of research has been, it could be argued that the

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<sup>1</sup> Ex-Model C schools are shorthand for suburban schools.

picture that emerges is incomplete, and somewhat simplistic, because it does not always attend to classroom practices. Consequently, we know very little about the 'classroom life' in a transforming South Africa, specifically in the early years of learning, to understand how the school identities of multilingual children are discursively constructed in primary classroom interactions. Furthermore, what is the role of language in the reproduction and maintenance of institutionally dominant cultural practices? Hence, my aim throughout this study is to seek to understand the production and reproduction of inequality in schools. Exactly how is inequality played out or perpetuated in multilingual classroom settings?

Against this background, the thesis explores the sociolinguistics of early schooling with a specific focus on social interaction, identity construction and relations of power. First, the study looks at the extent to which English is constructed and positioned within the institution. Second, I explore how young multilingual children, through ritual linguistic practices and performance, are socialised into what I call 'school identities', that is, how they become 'learners' (as well as the possibilities and impossibilities of classroom interaction). By the construction of school identities, I refer to discursive construction of 'ways with words', 'ways of organising the body' or 'ways of being' in which learners are positioned and regulated. Thirdly, it examines how particular identities unfold, moment by moment, in the classroom space. This means observing the extent to which participants position themselves (or are positioned) linguistically and otherwise in terms of the kinds of identities and role relationships made available to them. In general, who is constructed as what and why? Lastly, there is a question to be asked about what knowledge of language, literate demeanour and resources are valued and have currency; and which ideologies legitimise particular resources more than others do? Given the history of education in South Africa, the relationship between languages, identity and the conditions for education and social justice remain critical if we are to understand what goes on in classrooms and the implications of these relations for learning in the early years of schooling. This said, it is important to realise that this thesis is not about whether African languages, as previously marginalised languages, should be used as media of instruction or not. My main aim is to rather explore the school as a site of production and reproduction of monoglot ideologies and cultural practices which are used to develop particular orientations and understanding of the system. Moreover, it is a

space of struggle where certain resources are constituted as legitimate, whose regulation serves to effectuate and reproduce relations of power.

The study focuses on two grade one classrooms in a desegregated primary school in Johannesburg. The school discussed here was established in the early 1900s and for most of its life catered exclusively to white children. At the time of research for this study, the racial mix of the learner population had changed drastically due to the influx of black learners at the school, for most of whom English is an additional language. However, the staff population had remained relatively static (see chapter 4 for a fuller discussion). As is the case with all former English white schools in South Africa, English continues to be the medium of teaching and learning at this school. Through case study discussions, this study aims to draw attention to how multilingual children (in their first year of formal schooling) are apprenticed as learners, the kinds of identities made available to them, and what forms of linguistic knowledge and displays are recognised, privileged or marginalised in mainstream classrooms. Social interaction is at the heart of this thesis. My use of this concept springs from an understanding of social interaction as a complex phenomenon that always manifests in the dimension of time, and further involves ways in which participants relate to each other. The thesis analyses interactions between teachers and learners at specific moments in time. Interaction is a socially situated construct used here to refer to 'institutional' ways of talking, thinking and acting; how subjects take up positions in and are positioned by social interactions. In other words, I conceptualise social interaction as a site where teachers and learners behave in specific ways; as a site of identity construction underscored by particular sets of linguistic ideologies, discourses and practices.

This study of classroom interaction is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on, but not limited to, the following theoretical fields: critical sociolinguistics, post-structural, social and critical theories. Over time, a diverse body of theoretical concepts from sociology, philosophy and applied linguistics has shaped this study. For purposes of this thesis, I have examined and reviewed some of the principal literature that explores reproduction, ideology and inequality in education, particularly in relation to language/knowledge. During the research project, I became interested in the different works of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault whose ideas became central to my

understanding of the relationship between 'legitimate' language/knowledge and identity. Other texts that have come to inform my approach include for example Apple (1978, 1979, 1983), Bernstein (1971, 1986, 1990), Corson (1995); Gee (1992, 1996), Giroux (1981, 1997), Freire (1985, 1996), Heller (1995), Heller and Martin-Jones (2001), Makoni (2003), Makoni and Pennycook (2007), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), Soudien (1998, 2004) and Tollefson, (1995, 2004). Although there is considerable diversity in this literature, I have found some of the themes that emerge particularly helpful in researching the discursive construction of English (and other resources), ideology and identity positions in a multilingual South African school. The thesis is also informed by a range of writings and ideas that focus on poststructuralist questions, such as the discursive construction of identity, and the relations of power between participants as they take up specific positions in discursive practices. As Skeggs (1995, p.196) commented 'we are...being continually positioned by and positioning ourselves in relation to theory. This is not just a case of what we read but who we talk to, our institutional location, what our colleagues read, which conferences we go to and sometimes how we feel at that time'.

I derive my main theoretical tools from the sociological model, that is, the theory of practice developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b, 1990a, 1990b, 1991 etc.). Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus (including bodily-hexis) and capital are central to my analysis of social interaction as a complex site of enculturation; and relate to the conflicting and shifting ways of being unfolding in space and time. Furthermore, I draw on distinct but related theoretical approaches: post-structuralist approaches to identity (for example, Foucault, 1972; Butler, 1990, 1997); the concept of ideology as formulated by Terry Eagleton (1991), Jan Blommaert (1999, 2005) and Antonio Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony as guiding frameworks. Through this theoretical synthesis, I address intersecting questions about cultural capital (as different forms of cultural knowledge, including linguistic knowledge) and the discursive construction and performance of subject positions in social interactions. Foucault's (1972) notion of 'discursive production of the subject' and Butler's (1990) feminism-inspired conceptualisation of identity as 'performativity' are crucial towards making my arguments surrounding discourse, ideology and subject positions. I will argue that identity, and the performance thereof, is a consequence of dominant hegemonic discourses that are inextricably linked to specific social arrangements and

practices. Thus, this study further looks at the ideologies that underpin the legitimisation and marginalisation of certain knowledge systems in post-apartheid multilingual grade one classrooms.

Because of the particularities of early childhood development (ECD)<sup>2</sup> and racially desegregated schooling in South Africa (SA), I begin section 1.3 of this chapter by defining the ECD context, the significance of the study, the research questions and the aims. ECD is used generally to refer to education from Reception years to Grade 3. However, research for this study focused on the foundation phase, in particular the Grade 1 classrooms. In chapter two, a historical educational background including the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and the assimilation project will be discussed. To contextualise the questions that this thesis aims to address, chapter three will introduce the site where the research was conducted. The examination of social interaction in this study is premised on the understanding that classrooms are more than instructional spaces. Instead, classrooms are conceived as commingled with the world outside in very ambiguous and indeterminate ways. Hence, classrooms are extremely complex, unique, unpredictable, multidimensional and dynamic social sites of simultaneous activity.

Given the imbrications of the SA educational background it is impossible to discuss classroom practices without the context within which these are embedded; that is the historical, social and political factors including ideologies, and the discourses that constrain and enable specific practices. These factors influence, condition and shape what happens in multilingual primary school classrooms. Classrooms are not isolated spaces, separated from society. They are microcosms of the broader socio-political and cultural dispensation. That is to say, as Alastair Pennycook notes:

Everything outside the classroom, from language policies to cultural contexts of schooling, may have an impact on what happens in the classroom. And everything in the classroom, from how we teach, what we teach, and how we respond to students, the materials we use, and the ways we assess students, needs to be seen as social and cultural practices with broader implications. The challenge is to understand these relationships and to find ways of always focusing on the local while at the same time keeping an eye on the broader horizons (Pennycook, 2000, p. 102).

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<sup>2</sup> Early Childhood Development is an inclusive concept for education of children from birth to nine years of age. It includes the pre-Grade R programmes, Grade R programmes and the foundation phase (Grade 1-3).

However, the relationship between the classroom and the broader social and political context is a complex one. What happens inside the classroom is not merely a reflection of the outside world, but classrooms remain part and parcel of the world outside and play a significant role in how it operates. By this, I mean that classrooms cannot be looked at as simply ‘neutral sites’ but rather as social, cultural and political domains imbued with relations of power. From this perspective, an understanding of daily social interactions in multilingual classrooms is not only about a description of what goes on in those spaces; it is also about making critical interpretations of how the world outside is played out, mirrored, and (re) produced in the classroom. That is, to what extent do ideological practices (or discourses) support certain knowledge hierarchies, ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990a, 1991), ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll *et al.*, 1992) and not others. In addition, what are the consequences of these ideological practices for learner identities? Thus, by examining classroom interactions, this study aims to illuminate how particular representational resources are placed in multilingual classrooms; and the extent to which access to and the display of those resources locate grade one children, right at the beginning of the schooling career. Put differently, what meanings and messages are (un)obtrusively communicated to learners in and through social relations and practices?

### **1.3 The Case of Early Childhood Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

As mentioned earlier, this thesis is broadly concerned with social interactions in multilingual grade one classrooms in a racially desegregated primary school. It is a known fact in SA that ECD is in a crisis and facing further difficulties (Department of Education, 2003) posing an urgent need for redress of the current situation. Finding a solution is not only imperative for educators but also South African society. The reasons for poor performance in early childhood education are manifold, some dating back to the apartheid education system. The legacy of the apartheid education system and its inequalities resulted in increased school dropout, many students being under-educated and teachers lacking proper training. For instance, there is a shortage of newly trained teachers in SA because many teachers were trained during the apartheid years, which means that they themselves received poor education. Understanding the extent to which the apartheid ethos and practices remain deeply inscribed and how they have broadly shaped early childhood education is crucial if SA educationists are

to grapple with the transformation project and appreciate the resources and effort required.

As I shall discuss in chapter two, even though white education was better financed during the apartheid period, early learning and development remained disenfranchised. This continues to be the case in the post-apartheid era in which the slice of education budget to ECD is extremely low. The meagre expenditure caters for children from birth to nine years; this also covers the foundation phase of schooling, from Grade R to Grade 3. Despite the enrolment of over one million children for Grade 1 in 2006, statistics indicate that the average expenditure for ECD in the fiscal year 2006/2007 was 0.87% of the total education budget (The Sunday Times, 10 December 2006). The radical policy changes in the education field in SA have not yet led to profoundly new post-apartheid aspirations of transformation and redress, particularly in terms of the curriculum and teacher training. For instance, Brahm Fleish (2008) in his book *Primary Education in Crisis* reports that 85% of teachers in the foundation phase are not well trained in the new curriculum, which was introduced in 1999 and amended several times since then. As a result, children in South Africa's primary school from reception Grade R up to Grade 3 are not learning to read, write and count at the required levels because their teachers do not understand the teaching and learning methods required by the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

SA with its democratic eleven official languages policy, and the complexities of urban multilingualism, presents an added challenge to literacy development and learning. The current language policy (Department of Education, 1997) promotes the use of mother tongue/first language as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the early years of schooling. The underlying principle in this Language in Education Policy (LiEP) is 'to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s)' (DoE, 1997, p.1). The increased promotion of, and emphasis on mother tongue education, corresponds with additive bilingual education models. A number of researchers have also written passionately about the positive potential of mother-tongue education to improve learning in the early years, and the importance of embracing linguistic diversity in SA (see for example, Bloch, 2002; Heugh, 2002; Kamwangamalu, 2003; Mda, 2004). However, this Language in Education (LiEP) has not been successful, in many cases, as no clear



guidelines have been provided on how to implement it in schools. Compounding the matter further is the fact that school governing bodies (SGBs) are invested with the responsibility for LoLT policy formulation – a key decision that they are not well-informed, equipped or trained to carry out. This clearly points to a mismatch between government language policy that advocates an additive bilingual approach to education, and the actual practices in schools where English has become invincible, and overwhelmingly in demand, in the post-apartheid SA. Note here that the hegemony of English over other languages is experienced in a wide range of domains including the media, commerce, government, business etc. Consequently parents have had to choose English for their children's education, and the onus is on schools to provide English medium instruction (see de Klerk, 2000; Kamwangamalu, 2003). Due to the demand for a 'straight-for-English' approach, there has been a massive move of black children into previously segregated white, Indian and coloured English medium schools in the suburbs. Granville *et al.* (1998) use an economics metaphor to explain the position of English in SA, and internationally. They conclude that the overwhelming spread of English is due to the process of increasing returns, 'the more the domains of English use increase, the more people need to learn it. The more people know English, the more domains of its use can expand and the more profitable it is to produce resources in English' (1998, p.259). I discuss this further in the following chapter 2.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

In this section, I first show the importance of my study, and then introduce related research to locate this work within the relevant traditions of school education. This study is significant because it contributes to the sociology of schooling in a number of distinct ways. Early school socialisation in multilingual contexts is an area that remains under-researched, not only in SA but internationally as well. Literature theorising and explicating early education has paid scant attention to the processes and mechanics of socialisation in schools whereby children continuously transform into the dominant values and ethos of an expected social order. Thus, my aim is to demonstrate how children in their early school careers might be assimilated into ideological meanings privileging certain forms of knowledge/language as well as identity presentations. In addition, what exactly is the role of English in the

construction of these legitimate social and cultural practices – ways of presenting oneself, exhibiting knowledge and acting in racially desegregated classroom settings?

Issues concerning language and identity in post-apartheid SA, specifically in relation to the dominance of English, continue to be a prominent subject in academic discourse. Despite the appreciable amount of literature dedicated to the position of English and its hegemony (Blommaert *et al.*, 2005; Granville *et al.*, 1998; Kamwangamalu, 2003; Kapp, 2000, 2006; Rudwick, 2008), its different identities (Gaganakis, 1992; Makubalo, 2007; McKinney, 2007a), among others, there appears to be very little published research on the sociolinguistics of the classroom and its inequalities, particularly in relation to early schooling. In other words, the classroom interaction literature has not kept pace with social and cultural practices in these complex and racially transforming urban classroom settings to unveil the intimate relationship between language, permutations of power and ideology and the ensuing learning consequences.

This raises important questions about opportunity and access that the present study hopes to scrutinise and address in a society that continues to be deeply divided by material and social inequalities. It is a struggle to come to terms with progressive policy amid a wide range of inequitable educational practices. I will show later in this section that instead, much literature in early childhood schooling in SA tends to be geared towards multimodal approaches to literacy and literacy as a semiotic practice. This literature is heavily influenced by the multiliteracies pedagogy project in Britain, the United States and Australia (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 1997; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress *et al.*, 2000; New London Group, 1996).

The works of Gaganakis (1992), Makubalo (2007) and McKinney (2007a) provide some useful insights into the attitudes towards English language practices in multiracial secondary schools; how black learners in these schools position themselves in relation to the English language and other SA indigenous languages. Makubalo's study on the use of English by learners attending a desegregated high school reveals that

English maintains its position as the language of choice for most learners, for not only does it promise greater mobility in society, fluency therein is also a signifier of belonging to the particular community of a school variously positioned as an 'English school' (2007, p.37).

Margaret Gaganakis (1992) examined experiences of black learners attending English-medium non-racial private high schools. As is the case in the other research mentioned here, English is a second language for most of these learners. Gaganakis points out that the 'fluent use of well-accented English' (p.51) had a particular symbolic value at these schools. That is, the ability to speak, read or write adequately in English was 'perceived as a marker of upward mobility and a way of ensuring status in the school' (p.52) while African languages were regarded of low prestige value. McKinney's (2007a) paper *'If I speak English, does it make me less black anyway'* explores different racial varieties of English, and accents, of the youth in three secondary schools and demonstrates how these participants used racial labels to characterise the kinds of English used around them. She concluded that learners valued and attached prestige to certain uses of English varieties they perceived to typify 'white English' and stigma to those English varieties or ways of speaking English associated with black people – this echoes Gaganakis' findings on 'well-accented English' and the prestige associated with it.

With reference to research in the early years, as I shall illustrate, this literature (Bloch, Stein and Prinsloo, 2001; Prinsloo, 2004; Prinsloo and Stein, 2004; Stein and Newfield, 2007; Stein, 2003a, 2003b) is skewed more towards conceptions of literacy and multimodality both in in-school and out-of-school contexts. Bloch, Stein and Prinsloo's (2001) research project on children's early literacy learning in SA reported on the uses and meanings of literacy in different domains – the home, local community and school contexts. Evolving from this work, but not limited to it, there has been a growing number of published articles on literacy as a semiotic practice, to include different modes, signs, symbols and popular culture materials that children use to make meaning. For instance, Stein (2003a) explores narrative practices of grade 1 and grade 2 learners in a Johannesburg primary school. For the purposes of this research project, Stein employed a multimodal approach, under flexible conditions with little teacher intervention and constraints, to afford learners opportunities to use a range of semiotic modes and objects in storytelling, play, performance and writing.

Stein claims that under ‘an unpoliced zone’ (p.124) learners conceptualised, created and produced semiotic objects like dolls or child figures with different shapes and designs such as the traditional Ndebele style to mark the heterogeneity of local cultural experience and social locations. It is evident in her findings that learners used modes beyond language. It is her contention that multimodal pedagogies work to enable learners to unleash creativity in a number of varied ways, and develop different forms of learning beyond the linguistic.

Stein in her earlier paper *‘Rethinking resources: multimodal pedagogies in the ESL classroom’* made a similar point that it is important to realise ‘the limits of language as a channel for expressing the full arc of human experience. Language often fails us’ (2000, p.334). Thus, she argues for a paradigm shift from pedagogies that put more emphasis on language to those that accommodate multiple means of representations. In a similar vein, Prinsloo and Stein (2004) in *‘What’s inside the box?’* propose multiple modes and media of communication in pedagogic environments. The authors looked at conceptualisations of literacy and literacy teaching by analysing ways in which reading, writing and other communicative modalities are taught and learnt in four early learning and teaching settings. Drawing on the emergent literacy perspective, new literacy studies and social semiotics, they write that ways in which teachers engage with literacy pedagogy have critical consequences for the development of reading and writing because:

...children enter school with dispositions towards what can be done with speech, writing and other modalities, and are in turn shaped by what they encounter in early school settings. In effect, they develop ‘theories’ of values, constraints and possibilities of language, literacy and other communicative modalities. Rather than being black-boxes, then, sites of early literacy practices...should be investigated as complex communicative spaces: critical sites for up-close, detailed investigations into what is being produced by children and modelled for children and with the particular consequences for their careers as reader and writers (ibid., p.69).

The main point here is that the kinds of learners and readers children become, both in- and out-of-school environments, are shaped by different literacy experiences and resources. Thus, they argue for literacy teaching and learning which ‘move beyond autonomous models to more inclusive ecologically-based literacy pedagogies’ (ibid, p.81). More recently, this ‘frontier of literacy’ to use Thesen and van Pletzen’s (2006, p.19) words, is further evidenced in a collaborative paper *‘The policy-practice nexus*

*in English classrooms in Delhi, Johannesburg and London*' (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2007); as well as in Stein's (2008) book titled *Multimodal Pedagogies in Diverse Classrooms: Representation, Rights and Resources*.

This literature on local ethnographies has been successful in shedding light on the kinds of (out-of-school) multi-semiotic resources including home languages, cultures and childhood experiences that children bring to school. These studies tend to be descriptive ecological accounts of local literacy practices. However, they fail to engage power relations as a factor in analysis. I see the notion of power at the very centre of education where race, language and literacy continue to play an important and highly political role in SA contributing to social class divisions and cultural inequities. Although Prinsloo and Stein's research addresses home-school discontinuities, their research says nothing about the larger social and political forces operating in SA and how these forces affect language and literacy education. For instance, they do not attend to the political and ideological questions concerning why particular communicative practices such as English literacy practices have currency while others remain marginalised. In addition, what are the consequences of this for early learning and literacy in SA? Drawing on Street (2003, 2004), I argue that ethnographic studies should move beyond mere descriptions of local language and literacy practices that schoolchildren come experienced in, to include the socio-political context and framing discourses that position and construct resources differently in the first place. My point is that if we cannot answer that question, and address the broad structural inequalities and ideologies, then we place critical issues of social justice, access and opportunity in an agenda set elsewhere.

Furthermore, a major weakness in such studies is their narrow conceptualisation of the classroom, its participants and lack of connection to the wider concerns of a social theory of pedagogy: 'the cross-generational production and reproduction of knowledge and power' and 'the complex fabric of texts and discourses through which social reproduction is effected' (Luke, 1992, p.108). In other words, little reference is made to broaden the scope of classroom life by exploring the embedded discourses and ideologies that shape school institutions, and therefore learners' schooling experiences. As Pennycook (2000, p.90) argued in critiquing perspectives that tend to define the classroom as some kind of a closed box; 'classrooms are socio-political

spaces that exist in a complex relationship to the outside world'. Along the same lines, Tollefson (2000, p.19) makes mention of the 'direct and powerful impact of social, political and economic forces' of English on language education classrooms and how these forces shape student lives. It could be argued then that descriptive literacy studies such as the ones above can be in danger of simplification and essentialised notions with regard to classroom practices. Hence, in recent years, a number of scholars (e.g. Albright and Luke, 2008; Auerbach, 2005; Bartlett and Holland, 2002; Baynham, 2004; Luke, 2004; Street, 2004) have called for more encompassing ethnographies of literacy that not only describe local cultural forms of literacy (or literacy practices) but also examine how these practices are linked to socio-political processes, power dimensions and ideological issues. According to Street (2004) 'the ethnography of literacy...has to offer accounts not only of rich cultural forms and 'situated' literacy practices but also broader, more politically charged accounts of the power structures that define and rank such practices' (2004, p.327, emphasis in original). In the same vein, Blommaert *et al.* (2006) argue that in order to understand classroom environments or 'the school child's communicative world' (p.36) we need to take account of the particularities of cultural contexts that give rise to specific meanings, images, conceptions and constructions of what is legitimate, and what is not because 'the way in which literacy circulates in a society is strongly tied up with political and ideological arguments about what society should (ideally) look like, and who can count as a (full) citizen in such a society' (2006, p.35). I will elaborate further on this issue of micro-macro relationships in the next chapter.

As I have suggested with reference to the works discussed above, the literature reveals the absence of studies on early schooling in racially desegregated SA schools, which focus on classroom interactions as sites of social production and reproduction, in which linguistic identities, practices and statuses are discursively created and constructed. In an attempt to decrease this gap, this thesis aims to locate a micro study of one SA school within international debates about English in education, ideologies and identity in multilingual classrooms. Theoretically, I am attempting to synthesise discursive perspectives on schooling, poststructural paradigms and approaches from social theory, insights which originate in a long history of social, political and philosophical theory (Apple, 1978, 1979; Apple and Weis, 1983; Bernstein, 1971, 1973, 1986; Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977;

Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980, 2003 among others), which all share an orientation to the study of social practices, discourse structures and ideologies. This literature is relevant for my study because of its focus on the notion of power, particularly how education systems reproduce the interests of the dominant classes in society. As I mentioned earlier, my main theoretical underpinnings concern notions of linguistic capital, linguistic habitus, field; and the issue of how 'legitimacy' (English, and identity) is played out in social interactions through discursive practices. Through this synthesis, my intention is to unravel some of the socialisation processes, practices and discourses which are powerful vectors for communicating value-laden meanings to children, and in which learners (and teachers) are positioned and regulated. That is, which constructions of identity and linguistic representation, which I defined earlier as 'school identities', become normalised.

Furthermore, I argue the view that the manifestations of these 'school identities' serve to benefit some children and obscure others from view early on in their school careers. This has important implications for learning environments in a multilingual and culturally diverse society such as SA, where issues of redress, equity and equality remain fundamental to the building of a democratic society. Related to this are questions of which knowledge/language counts, who is constructed as what and why, which are inextricably linked to ongoing debates about desegregation in SA public schools, the status of black learners in these school, the unassailable position of English, and a multicultural approach to education. It is critical to establish conditions and contexts of learning in which social, linguistic and cultural difference are harnessed, and not seen as a hindrance to learning.

### **1.5 Aims and Research Questions**

Arising from the particularities of desegregated schooling above, and using sociological and post-structuralist approaches to language and identity as my theoretical lens, this research attempts to address two aims in this study:

- To examine how young black multilingual children in a racially desegregated primary school are 'apprenticed' into institutional practices and become 'institutionalised', and the kinds of subject positions that are constructed or enacted through social interaction. In other words, the study broadly aims to

look at how black children in their first year of formal schooling are socialised as learners; Willes (1983) describes this process by which children become pupils as ‘children into pupils’.

- To identify what ‘bodies’ of knowledge (forms, presentation and displays of resources) count as legitimate knowledge and come to dominate in SA classrooms; in particular how English is given central place in classrooms and how it locates children in Grade 1 right at the beginning of their schooling.

In order to address these inter-connected concerns, the research questions that drive the direction of the study, are:

- How do black multilingual children in their first year of schooling become socialised as learners of English in a former white English medium school?
- Which forms of knowledge, and knowledge of English, are constructed as valuable, and which ones are relegated to a secondary position?
- What identities unfold, become validated and why? That is, who is constructed as what and why?
- What are the implications of the role of English, ideology and identity for learners in racially desegregated public schools in SA?

## **1.6 Conclusion and Organisation of the thesis**

This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge about how young multilingual black children become ‘schooled’ and ‘assimilated’ into the dominant institutional practices and culture of former English-medium white schools. It illuminates the significant role of English in the construction of what is legitimate and what is not. It explores social interaction as a site of many manifestations imbued with power relations, whereby particular forms of linguistic practices and representation are valued, perpetuated, classified and hierarchised. Through this analysis, I argue that English language ideologies, and discourse practices play a key role in the legitimisation of certain ‘bodies’ of knowledge, positionings and unequal relations of power in classrooms. Finally, I consider the implications of the findings for socialisation in early schooling.



Chapter 1 sets out to delineate the outline of my investigation in an attempt to frame the research questions, aims, rationale and the scope of this research.

Chapter 2 maps the terrain in which this study was set. I investigate the historical experiences and background of education during apartheid and post-apartheid periods, including the language policy and practices. I will examine some studies as cases to illustrate the ideological assumptions and orientations that continue to contribute to particular conceptions of education in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, I introduce the notions of language ideology, and hegemony, in an attempt to contextualise the position and status of English in a transforming South Africa. I will introduce the works of Eagleton, 1991; Gal, 1992; Blommaert, 2005 in my discussion of the concept of ideology, as well as draw on Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony.

In Chapter 3 I outline the conceptual framework underpinning this thesis. I look at Bourdieu's (e.g. 1977a, 1977b, 1990a, 199b, 1991) notions of linguistic habitus, linguistic capital and linguistic market as main theoretical issues. I will argue that the valuing of English and forms of representation over others establishes these resources as cultural capital or power-knowledge as in Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980) for which learners should strive. I also draw on post-structural theorisations reflecting on the relationship between language, identity construction and power relations (for example, Foucault, 1977, 1980; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Butler, 1990, 1997; Walkerdine, 1997; Weedon, 1997, 2004).

Chapter 4 describes my research methodology and the epistemological considerations which informed my theoretical framework for the dissertation. In this chapter, I reflect on my approach to the research and the research process, and discuss the design of the empirical research as a qualitative case study. I also discuss the research setting, which I shall call Johannesburg Primary school (JP), and the research methods by which I collected and analysed the data.

Subsequent chapters present the findings of the study. Chapter 5 '*The Construction of English in a Multilingual Primary School: Reality and Rhetoric*' explores the relationship between language, discourse and ideology. Drawing on interview data

with staff, this chapter focuses specifically on institutional discourses about English, and other languages, that mediate the general practices and ethos at Johannesburg primary school. I will also draw attention to how the discourses function to produce and reproduce the hegemony of English. My particular aim is to show the institutional socialisation processes through which black multilingual learners in year one of their school careers are apprenticed, and assimilated, into the dominant linguistic and cultural practices in a formerly white school.

Chapter 6 on '*The (Re) Production of Monoglot Ideologies and Ethos in Grade 1 Classrooms*' builds on the preceding chapter 5, and also acts as a bridge to the themes of analysis in chapter 7. In this chapter I explore the data collected in two Grade 1 classrooms to look at the actual classroom practices and activities. Linked to the idea of discourses as power imbued objects (Foucault, 1977; 1980), this chapter focuses on the relationship between English, identity and relations of power. It demonstrates that while English is privileged, some varieties or forms are valued more than others. I will also concentrate on the question of identity, with a particular focus on how children are stratified based on the kinds of English and knowledge resources they have or lack. My intention in this chapter is to show how the extent to which the hegemony of English is perpetuated in school classrooms serves to include and exclude children.

Chapter 7 titled '*The Construction of Languages other than English*' mainly concentrates on the positioning of other languages at Johannesburg primary school. As in the preceding chapter my analysis here will mainly draw on classroom data involving teachers and learners. In addition, this chapter will look at some of the language activities between learners. Looking at the kinds of roles and functions that African languages are made to serve, this chapter will illustrate the extent to which these languages are devalued and constructed as sub-standard or second-rate in the school environment. The chapter also explores ways in which some learners navigate this English dominated site to use other languages that the school has positioned as second-rate.

Chapter 8 focuses on the implications of this study for early learning in desegregated South African schools, particularly with regard to English in multilingual classrooms.

In this chapter, I reflect on the overall questions that this study set out to investigate from a position of reflexivity. I will reflect on the methodology, discuss the importance of the findings and identify future directions for research and practice. I discuss measures that may address the social justice issue in education, particularly in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. In conclusion, the chapter will argue for a critical approach in education that understands how English language ideologies operate to produce and reproduce existing power relations in society.

## **Chapter 2**

### **An overview of South African Politics and Ideologies in Education**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into three sections (i.e. 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) to provide a historical overview, past and present, of education in South Africa, including the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and school integration. In section 2.2, I introduce approaches to ideology (Eagleton, 1991; Gal, 1992; Blommaert, 2005) and hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) to provide the perspective from which this study is carried out. Section 2.3 of the chapter begins with a focus on education during the apartheid era. It outlines how race, along with language, has been used for classifying and dividing SA society, and as a basis for segregationist education policies. Section 2.4 attends to post-apartheid education, with a specific focus on the integration of schools to situate the context within which this study is based. This educational background is central in chapter 4, which introduces the school setting in which my research was carried out. The long history of stark inequalities in SA, education, economic and social oppression, continue to haunt a society that has only recently begun the transformation project. Consequently, the issue of English in education, its hegemony, its role in the construction of identities remains a site of struggle and contestation, particularly in a society where education structures and policies are in transition. Continuing my quest to understand the socialisation processes of young black children in a former white-only (ex-Model C) school, the acquisition of and display of 'school identities' and what that means for the school careers, I recognise that ideology (which I discuss later in this chapter) is at the heart of institutional cultural practices. My aim is to examine the cycles of daily classroom interactions, and English language practices, as reflecting and revealing ideologies about the institutional ethos. At the same time, I argue that these ideological conceptions are bound up in the context of historical processes such as apartheid and the post-apartheid era, and globalisation.

In chapter 1, I have argued for a critical approach (e.g. Gee, 1992, 1996; Pennycook, 2000, 2001; Tollefson, 1995) that not only looks at school classrooms as instructional sites, but as social and cultural spaces that carry and dispense considerable presuppositions about what is perceived as legitimate or illegitimate (English)

language/knowledge practices, and what are appropriate identities. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) pointed out, schools play a key role in the production and reproduction of inequalities, the dominant culture and ideology, and unequal relations of power. The (re)production of these inequalities become propagated through ideologies of language and accomplished through social and discursive practices in specific historical locations and in a number of institutional sites such as schools (see Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996). I see this as a central area of interest in the context of SA where education, and language, have been what Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p.x) call sites of resistance, empowerment and discrimination, and where the apartheid masters used schooling in general as one of the powerful vectors, besides skin colour, to engineer and perpetuate its divide-and-rule ideology against the black community. The examination of social interactions in this thesis is premised on an understanding that school classrooms are socio-political spaces with a complex relationship to the social order outside the classroom. By this I mean that classrooms are never 'just classrooms' to use Pennycook's (2000, p.89) notion, but are imbued with value-laden messages and practices, as discussed in chapter 1. Elsa Auerbach (1995) has explained the complex interplay between the (ESL) language classrooms and the broader social order as follows:

pedagogical choice about curriculum development, content, materials, classroom processes, and language use, although appearing to be informed by apolitical professional considerations, are, in fact, inherently ideological in nature, with significant implications for learners' socioeconomic roles (1995, p.9).

Contrary to the widespread optimistic liberal view that defines education as a means to an end, that it provides equal opportunity, treatment and access for all, this thesis engages a critical analysis in order to develop a fuller understanding of the micro-politics of the classroom, and how ideologies (about English and related 'habitus') are reproduced in daily classroom interactions. What kinds of 'school identities', i.e. English language practices and habitus, are considered 'normal', good, appropriate in the classroom and school context, and how do these particular ideological orientations serve to advantage and disadvantage children? In the following chapter 3 for instance, I elaborate on Bourdieu's notion of habitus which I use to capture not only the institutional ways of being but the specific kinds of English varieties/presentation that are deemed to have currency, and therefore become 'naturalised' throughout the

school system. Macedo *et al.*'s (2003) conceptualisation of habitus as a kind of apprenticeship is helpful for understanding how black children, to whom English is an additional language, are socialised as learners in an English-medium desegregated school in this study. To quote Macedo *et al.*, habitus can be defined as a form of

apprenticeship, that is, socially learned discourse and behaviour that can either deny or affirm access to particular social and cultural practices. Individuals who have been apprenticed through particular discourses to approach the dominant 'norm' become competent speakers of the standard, while members who develop discourses that diverge from the 'norm' are perceived as speaking nonstandard varieties (2003, p.29).

My point in this chapter, and throughout this thesis, is that ideology and hegemony influence schooling and schooling practices in such a way as to provide concepts and assumptions which shape a particular world-view of education. This sentiment is close to but not commensurate with the work of Foucault (1972, 1980). Foucault employs a more encompassing concept of 'discourse' to embrace the notion of ideology. For Foucault, the idea of positioning certain forms of knowledge as 'truth' is constituted only within discourses that sustain and are sustained by power. In this way, discourses 'systematically form the object of which they speak...[they] are not objects, they constitute them' (Foucault, 1972, p.44). What he means is that all truth is constituted by ideology, if ideology is seen as power-linked discourse (see Woolard, 1998). The formation and practice of discourse is a central focus of Foucault's work, which I believe provides the opportunity to understand the intricate relationship between bodies of knowledge, power and institutions. He sees discourse as one of the principal activities through which systems of ideas (ideology) are circulated, produced and reproduced. That is, ways of talking, ways of being, ways of acting and ways of thinking constitute sets of ideas, which function to perpetuate power relations within particular sites of practice. Drawing on Foucault, Ball (1990) argues:

Discourses are...about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations...Thus discourses construct certain possibilities for thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations (p.17).

Along with Bourdieu's (1977a, 1986, 1991) and Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) investigation of relations of power and legitimacy in cultural practices, notions of

habitus and capital, Foucault's seminal work provide us with the notion of discursive practices in which forms of knowledge/language and specific habitus are constructed, regulated, positioned and naturalised whilst other representations are pathologised. Bourdieu, constructing a discourse upon economic metaphors, argues that those accepted and endorsed bodies of knowledge and forms of resources in education can be considered as *cultural capital*. And, the acquisition of this cultural capital constitutes *symbolic capital* (e.g. rewards, certificates) positioning subjects as either successful or unsuccessful. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. From this point of view, then, classrooms must be looked at against the background of the educational history in SA, and the highly political and contentious issue of race and English. My contention is that schools/classrooms are not simply passive spaces that mirror the social order and the dominant ideology. They actually play an active role in the very construction of the dominant culture and ideology, as well as what is perceived as legitimate knowledge and language (see Apple, 2004; Blommaert, 2005a; Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b; Macedo *et al.*, 2003). I argue that *all* educational practice and activity is neither objective nor static, but that it always serves to perpetuate existing social relations and advances particular interests in a given context. As Pennycook says:

[A]ll knowledge is produced within a particular configuration of social, cultural, economic, political and historical circumstances and therefore always both reflects and helps to (re)produce those conditions. Furthermore, since all claims to knowledge represent the interest of certain individuals or groups, we must always see knowledge as interested (1989, p.595).

In the following chapters, we will realise that (English) linguistic homogeneity, through discursive practices, is construed in a positive light while other linguistic and cultural practices do not get the same affirmation.

## **2.2 Ideology and Hegemony**

This study draws upon the concept of ideology and language ideology in order to examine the historical specificity of English in education and how some of its conceptions map into classroom practices in post-apartheid SA, a period during which the education system opened all school doors to all children regardless of race or language (in principle). The notion of ideology is a slippery one, and has been defined across a broad spectrum of meaning. The definitions include classical notions such as

Engels (1989, p. 47) description of ideology as ‘false consciousness’, and Marx and Engels much quoted metaphor of ‘ideology as distortion’ i.e. producing an upside-down image of the world (see discussion in Eagleton, 1991, p.89). More recently, ideology has been conceptualised as mental phenomena which are unconscious, ideational or cognitive (for example, van Dijk, 1995, 1998; Burbules, 1995); while other researchers see ideology as deliberate, subjective representations and perceptions (for example, Silverstein, 1979; Irvine, 1989). The cognitive approach to ideology refers primarily to systems of ideas or perceptions, such as racism or gender discrimination, performed in specific ways and in particular situations. On the other hand, ideologies as material phenomena would emphasise the situated context, that is, discourses, instruments of power, practices and institutions, which give substance to or propagate these sets of ideas. Although these two understandings of ideology might seem opposed, I see them as complementary and interacting in the context of SA where state organs were deliberately used to perpetuate inequalities of all sorts, certain ideas, belief systems and relations of power. In this sense, ideologies can be understood as woven into and permeating everyday life, including classroom experiences. It is important to point out that I take the view that ideology is multiple, nuanced, layered or polycentric, to use Blommaert’s (2005) conceptualisation. And, furthermore, his proposition that when addressing ideology we should be thinking about it in terms of ‘who-what-where-why-and how of ideology’ (2005, p.171) is helpful for my discussion. As I show in the next sections, different forms of ideologies from social Darwinism, colonisation, racial, language, to apartheid’s divide-and-rule ideologies inspired education in South Africa.

Against this background, I follow definitions of ideology formulated in cultural and social theory by scholars such as Eagleton (1991), Blommaert (2005) and Gal (1992). Eagleton suggests that ideology, among an array of other meanings, could be understood as ‘a particular organisation of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in society’ (1991, p.18). The characterising of ideology as contributing to the production of lived relations is helpful because it puts action at the heart of the definition. My understanding of the concept is premised on the assumption that ideologies are undoubtedly lived and expressed in everyday practices, social and cultural situations,



but not necessarily shared. That is, they are distributed and spread throughout the social arrangements or structural formations of society. In sum, ideologies are often 'at work' in social situations, i.e. everyday social practices (van Dijk, 1998). In this way ideology is recognisably linked to Bourdieu's (1977b) use of the notion of 'doxa' (simply meaning the 'natural' way things are) as well as his characterisation of habitus, an embodied set of dispositions enacted in accordance with specific settings. The idea that habitus is communicated through socialisation processes at home and at school is important for this thesis. I will elaborate the concept of habitus further in chapter 3 to explain how ideology, English and identity positions stand in relation to one another. How do classroom interactions as mediated by English in education ideologies or webs of meanings, produce an asymmetry of power relations, which mould particular identities?

There is some correlation between ideology as underlying 'deep structures' of social behaviour (Blommaert, 2005, p.162) and Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony as cultural domination. Although the concept of hegemony was initially popular among neo-Marxists, it was later used more generally to explain the working of power. Thus, I introduce it as a supplementary concept, alongside ideology, to extrapolate the processes of socialisation and the functioning of power in SA educational institutions. Education, in Gramsci's works, is central to his formulation of the concept of hegemony. According to Joseph A. Buttigieg, a Gramsci scholar, '...the role of education in Gramsci's thought cannot be properly appreciated unless one recognizes that it resides at the very core of his concept of hegemony' (Buttigieg, 2002, pp.69-70). For Gramsci every hegemonic relationship is an 'educational' one (1971, p. 350). That is, hegemony involves the education of individuals and/or groups in order to secure consent to the dominant group's agenda (see Mayo, 2005, 2007).

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci used the concept of hegemony to refer to the cultural domination (power or 'rule') of the domineering group (bourgeoisie) over the rest of society. The power of the dominant group is such that it controls sectors of life including the economy, and has unassailable monopoly over the state. Livingstone (1976) describes hegemony as a social situation in which 'all aspects of social reality are dominated by or supportive of a single class' (p.235). Hegemony does not only involve processes of ideological domination and contestation but, as Williams (1976)

puts it, it incorporates a 'whole body of practices and expectations' (p.205). The core of Gramsci's concept of hegemony is that the bourgeoisie did not rule simply through force (monopoly over the State) but by consent (control over culture and ideas of Civil society) as well. Note that although Gramsci normally uses the concept of hegemony to refer to ways in which the dominant group gains consent to its rule from the subalterns, he occasionally uses the concept to mean both consent and coercion together. Gramsci argues that the State uses direct domination, facilitated by police, the law and army, for instance, to perpetuate its position of power, while Civil society operates by 'hegemonic consensus', as he defined it:

the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Gramsci, 1971, p.12).

It is useful to keep in mind that while ideology refers to systems of ideas which organise the way we behave or should behave, hegemony, on the other hand, normalises the dominant ways of looking at the world through ideological persuasion, while repressing alternative ideologies or other understandings of the world as nonsensical. Jan Blommaert (2005) writes:

At the end of the day, hegemony may be what it is *because there is a real price to be paid for being anti-hegemonic*. The price may be that one is not understood, not heard, not recognised as a subject, but it may also be that one is ostracised, exiled, killed or jailed, made unemployable, or declared insane (2005, p.167, emphasis in original).

This insight is useful for understanding the relationship between ideologies, hegemony and identity in the context of SA. I see the concept of hegemony in broader terms, that it includes ideologies, but is not reducible to these ideologies. As I discuss in the next paragraph, my analysis of the SA education shows a far greater blending and smudging of these two concepts. The historical social context in SA is of course an ambiguous, complex and contradictory one, with carefully crafted liberal, radical as well as racist traditions. One might argue that SA represents aspects of both ideology and hegemony, thus bringing into question essentialist notions in which these concepts are often referred to and thought about. I agree with Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001) that while 'hegemony is a recognizable process, it is neither stable

nor monolithic. Rather, it is constantly shifting, being made and remade, characterized by contradiction and ambiguity, productive of opposing consciousness and identities in subordinate populations, and always exposed to the possibility of alternative counterhegemonies' (p.247).

The workings of racial ideologies in SA clearly demonstrated that ideologies might be forcibly imposed. Unlike hegemony that tends to homogenise ideas and is therefore non-negotiable, ideologies can ultimately be challenged and a set of new ideologies may be introduced when the social position of the dominant group changes, and another group with different ideologies come in its place. However, aspects of dominant practices may remain the same despite the installation of the new group. For instance, the introduction of new democratic policies and legislation by SA's first democratically elected government signalled different ideologies, as opposed to the apartheid's segregationist education policies. Despite this change in ideologies, SA is still reeling in some ideologies belonging to the past, where English has hegemony over other languages and its use is overwhelmingly favoured not only in education but also in media where it has the biggest slice of airtime on SA television, and in government where speeches in parliament are conducted in English (e.g. Kamwangamalu, 2001). Phaswana's (2003) study of language policy and practices by the post-apartheid government reported similar conclusions that English is prevalent in all organs of the state. According to one interviewee in Phaswana's study, English dominates virtually all communication in government because 'it is convenient, it is easy and it is cheap; it is a *lingua franca*' (Phaswana, 2003, p.124 emphasis in original). These results are telling given the role, status and position of English in SA education institutions. My discussion in section 2.3 of this chapter will illustrate the complex interplay between those social conditions, instruments of power and discursive practices within which the dominant agenda, say the supreme value of English and associated identities, is promulgated and normalised. Furthermore, it will highlight the participation of individual subjects or groups in their own subordination, whether conscious or unconscious. For instance, it could be argued that by consenting to (to use Gramsci's formulation) or submitting to the idea that English-medium education and proficiency in English inevitably lead to socioeconomic success or middle class status, SA parents actually support this dominating force, on the one hand. On the other hand, schools further this illusion by educating multilingual

children in year 1 to see English as a 'commodity in great demand' (Young, 2001, 252) and producing certain kinds of identities. This is successfully done by imposing English as 'legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force' and at the same time communicating a logic of disinterest (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.4). I will elaborate on this issue of language legitimacy and the production of unequal relations of power in chapter 3.

Hence, I argue that social institutions such as desegregated schools in SA, in their symbolic and material existence, serve to cement the existing hegemony of English in education, and marginalise 'otherness' that does not seem to fit in with the 'natural' order of things (ideologies). The powerful role of education in cementing hegemony recalls Louis Althusser's (1971, 1977) notion of 'ideological State apparatuses'. He writes that 'no other apparatus has the obligatory audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day, for five or six days out of seven' (1971, p.30). Althusser's conceptualisation of ideological state apparatus seems deterministic; thus it collapses into a theory of domination that does not allow for any form of challenge or contestation. However, his argument that educational establishments are not neutral, and the meanings of such institutions need to be looked at within the context of ideological state apparatus is valid.

### **2.3 Education under Apartheid**

SA has emerged from a brutal and repressive apartheid regime with a long history. The majority of its citizens were oppressed owing to racial and ethnic classification. During more than four decades in power (1948-1994), the apartheid government systematically applied its policies to rule and divide communities (especially black communities<sup>3</sup>) physically and socially (through geographic separation) and mentally by perpetuating constructions of inferiority and superiority. Nothing was exempted. All aspects of life, including schooling bore testimony to the apartheid ideology of white supremacy. The racist logic of the system of apartheid was to exclude black South Africans from the mainstream of South African society. In education, therefore, the nature and extent of enforced ethnic boundaries and territorial and linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> As I have mentioned in chapter 1, in this thesis I use the term Black to refer to all non-white South Africans, except where I discuss historically designated racial categories or identities. Thus, I will distinguish between Coloureds, Indians and Africans.

separation had immense implications for educational policy and pedagogic practice. Racially defined schools, racist classification of people and the bolstering of ethnicity played a significant role in the construction of racial and social class identities in SA. As Carrim and Soudien, unequivocally sum it

The racial classification of South Africans influenced every aspect of their lives: where they lived, where they schooled, who they interacted with, which social amenities they had access to, their social relations, including who they slept with, and their political positions. Most, if not all people's transactions were governed by legislation (e.g. the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act, the Separate Act) and officially policed. This discursive reach of racial ideology thus cut deep into the fabric of everyday society... 'Race' influenced the *material* conditions of people's lives in explicit and direct ways, ensuring that South Africans lived segregated and unequal lives in almost every sense of the terms (1999, p.154, emphasis in original).

A central feature of apartheid was the setting up of separate and different education systems. With no fewer than 15 departments of education and tangled bureaucracies created by such a system, educational gaps between the races were widened. Indeed, as Neville Alexander pointed out, all these departments were 'mere sub-departments carrying out a single carefully orchestrated policy of racial discrimination in education' (Alexander, 1985, p.159). For instance, the Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953, the Coloured Persons Education Act No. 47 of 1963 and the Indian Education Act of 1965<sup>4</sup> - were established to ensure that all groups lived and developed independently of each other. Each racial group was to be educated in its own institutions, by members of the specific group, and each was to be provided with the skills deemed suitable for it. Aiming to subjugate black people psycho-ideologically to the designs of apartheid, they (Blacks) received impoverished education intended to prevent them participating in the modern sector of the economy, thus training and channelling them for cheap labour tasks such as in domestic, mining and agricultural services. According to Hlatshwayo (2000, p.65) Bantu education sought to 'miseducate the Africans so that their academic certificates became irrelevant for the labour market'. As H.F Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs in 1953 and later Minister of Bantu Education, once put it 'What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? (cited in Jansen, 1990, p.200). In contrast, apartheid extended, imposed and enforced the privileges of the white SA

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<sup>4</sup> The Bantu Education Act of 1953 was designed for Africans, the Coloured Person's Act of 1963 for Coloured learners and the Indian Education Act of 1965 for Indians.

minority; they enjoyed good education, ready employment and had a clear sense of control of their individual and collective destinies (Fiske and Ladd, 2004, p.2). That is, 'just as the black child was trained for his or her future place in South African society, so too was the white child to be trained for his or her place in the social order' (Reagan, 1987, p.302). Schools clearly became 'part of a broader network of control agencies...' (Asmal and James, 2001, pp.197-98).

Education became illustrative of regularised and comprehensive control, with black people relegated to an essentially totalitarian and dehumanising environment, their every move restricted and consistently reminded of their relative powerlessness. The teaching and learning practices, per capita funding, teacher education and training, governance structures, curriculum and textbooks were severely circumscribed. As a result, black schools were overwhelmed with overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated buildings, inadequate facilities, and ill-qualified teachers. It should be noted here that though education for blacks was generally inefficient and under-funded, education departments catering for Indian and Coloured persons were better resourced compared to Black (African) education departments. For instance, Table 1 below demonstrates the government expenditure per student according to different racial groups.

Table 1: Expenditure per student (South African rands).

|      | <b>African</b> | <b>Coloured</b> | <b>Indian</b> | <b>White</b> |
|------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1970 | 17             | 73              | 73            | 282          |
| 1980 | 139            | 253             | 513           | 913          |

Adopted from Tihanyi (2007).

This table clearly shows the extent to which the education of black children was comprised, while white schools received generous financial support and superior educational facilities. This resulted in a massive exodus of movement by blacks into these schools in the post-apartheid era (see section 2.4 for a fuller discussion). Curricula were also different and placed different values on different colours and ethnic identity. As spelled out by Fiske and Ladd (2004, p. 45)

curricula were written with white learners in mind and little effort was made to consider the needs of non-white learners. Instruction for the latter was designed to

reinforce their lesser social status. Advanced vocational and technical subjects were available only to whites, as were higher-level math and science. Apartheid also greatly affected history instruction, which sought to legitimise the prevailing social order and to teach students about their proper place in that order. The role of Afrikaners in South African history was glorified while other groups, especially Africans, received little mention.

Moreover education was compulsory for white students, and for black students it was deliberately fabricated to perpetuate the view that blacks should not be allowed to rise 'above the level of certain forms of labour'<sup>5</sup> (as quoted in Mandela, 1994, p.167). Clearly, the establishment of privileges for one group at the expense and denial of others was the norm and, of course, supported by the politics of the day. Although the aggressive tradition of segregation is often linked to Afrikaner rule, it is worth noting that apartheid is symptomatic of a colonial history. Well before 1948 racial segregation was the norm and had assumed formal status. For instance, black people had been relegated to township areas, a move calculated to keep them as far away as possible from the white folk. Townships<sup>6</sup> were established on the edges of major cities; blacks had to travel to the cities to work and return to respective townships at the end of the day while whites were allowed limited access to these townships. In addition, the white-controlled government passed laws to exclude blacks from voting, making them voiceless.

Here, the state perpetuated ideologies of inequality and constructions of black children as a problem have had profound and far-reaching consequences for the education of black children in SA. These deep-rooted assumptions and stereotypes held of black people were ultimately aimed to maintain social and cultural reproduction, economic and political status quo rather than upset it. Indeed, there is widespread agreement in international research that schools reproduce labour relations that serve to maintain the functioning of capitalism - see for example, Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981) on French schools, Bowles and Gintis (1976) research in the USA, and the well-known work of Paul Willis (1977) in Britain, particularly *Learning to Labour – How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Similar to the SA experience, Tollefson (1991) has shown that ESL classrooms in the USA operate to

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<sup>5</sup> Hendrik Verwoed's, Minister of Native Affairs and later Minister of Bantu Education, address to Parliament in 1953 during which the Bantu Education Act was passed and adopted.

<sup>6</sup> Black urban slums.

channel minority ethnic groups, such as Indo-Chinese refugee, to low-order jobs. Tollefson (1991) explains that

refugees are educated for work as janitors, waiters in restaurants, assemblers in electronic plants, and other low-paying jobs offering little opportunity for advancement, regardless of whether the refugees have skills...suitable for higher paying jobs (p.108).

What emerges most clearly from this is that education (and the spread of English that I discuss later in this chapter) is at the very heart of cultural, economic and political issues. My point, as I have mentioned earlier, is that both apartheid and post-apartheid education fashion particular kinds of ‘school identities’ or habitus. The irony of this, as I show throughout this thesis, is that manifestations of these ‘school identities’ or (English) linguistic habitus, during the democratic post-apartheid education, particularly in ex-Model C schools, has led to further social inequalities and class divisions – thus recalling what Bourdieu calls *symbolic violence* and *misrecognition*. For Bourdieu misrecognition plays a key role to what he calls the function of symbolic violence, which refers to ‘the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.167). Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence and misrecognition has much in common with Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony. As I have discussed earlier, hegemony is about the process of domination as well as integration, that is, how the dominant groups exert power over the whole society, and make alliances to achieve consent from the subordinated groups (Fairclough, 1995). In other words, individuals or groups could be subjected to all sorts of violence (e.g. racial/linguistic discrimination, denied access to resources and treated as inferior) but they may not perceive it as such; rather, these individuals or groups may regard their situation to be normal. A case in point is the assimilation practices, under the guise of racial integration in schools, which have been uncovered in former English-medium white schools in South Africa, which I discuss in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

For the purposes of this study, I have found Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence useful to an extent. It is helpful in as far as understanding the discourse practices of domination that have come to be taken-for-granted in post-apartheid SA, and the role of schools in reflecting and reproducing educational inequities, as well as social class



divisions. However, I found it limiting for exploring the complex ways in which SA students opposed and resisted the apartheid system of education and language policy in June 1976, particularly related to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction – as I discuss in the following section. In this regard, I follow a number of writers (for example, Gal, 1989; Heller, 1992; Woolard, 1985) and argue that Bourdieu's view of symbolic violence is narrow because it does not take into account ways in which marginalised groups may challenge hegemonic tendencies. Heller (1995), among others, criticises Bourdieu's theoretical framework for its over-determinism. For instance, Heller's study on language use and language choice in Quebec showed that many speakers, most of whom were bilingual in French and English, chose to use French in situations where English was expected, as a political strategy and as an act of resistance to the dominance of English. The difficulty with Bourdieu's view of symbolic violence then is that there seems little room for understanding an agent's resistance or change because these issues are largely absent from his formulation of symbolic violence. A key question that concerns me here is: what implications does the notion of symbolic violence have for analysing situated classroom interactions, particularly with reference to how learners resist some identities, which position them as 'mediocre' or 'pedestrian' among their peers? (see chapters 6 and 7 for a fuller discussion).

### **2.3.1 Apartheid's Language Policy and Planning**

The SA colonial history and the apartheid ideology had imprinted itself on the linguistic ecology. Language policy and planning was used, implicitly and explicitly, to further political purposes as well as engineer 'gate-keeping' in education:

as in the rest of the body politic, apartheid language policy and planning for black people was no less than a carefully designed obstacle race at the same time as it was a wonderfully crafted affirmative action programme for white, especially Afrikaans-speaking, people (Alexander, 2004, p. 117).

In 1953, UNESCO's report on the use of mother tongue education was published; aiming to mobilise international support for using mother tongue as the initial medium of instruction. The Bantu Education Act was passed in the same year, extending mother-tongue instruction for black learners from four to the first eight years of schooling. Although this seemed to be in line with UNESCO's recommendations, the

aim of the apartheid government was political rather than educational. The government conveniently used the opportunity to cultivate its separatist and discriminatory education policy. H.F Verwoerd made the objective clear in 1953: 'when I have control over the native education, I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them' (Christie, 1991, p.12). In addition, English and Afrikaans would have to be used equally as media of instruction at secondary level. That is, children would have to be taught in their mother tongue for the first eight years, thereafter take 50% of their subjects in English and another 50% in Afrikaans. This imposition meant that 50% of the school subjects in black secondary schools had to be taught in Afrikaans. In effect, as it surfaced later, in 1976, it was the seeding process of the government's effort to create a niche for Afrikaans. It was clear that since British rule, English was consistently gaining momentum; an issue of grave concern for the government.

The fact that black children had to take half of their subjects in Afrikaans and the other half in English is an interesting one, raising questions about the pedagogical soundness of this approach. This project did not take off and so the results this approach could have yielded remain unclear. However based on international studies (for example, García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzmán, 2006; Phillipson, 2003; Ramanathan, 2005; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Tollefson and Tsui, 2004) on language-in-education policy and practice, there is widespread consensus as to the importance of home languages, in principle, as the most suitable medium in the early years of learning. This somewhat stands in contrast to the dual language medium (50-50 policy) espoused in apartheid education, with both Afrikaans and English as second, third or fourth languages to the black learners. Drawing on the idea of transfer of cognitive skills, the work of Cummins (1984, 1996) based in Canadian schools and others suggests, that cognitive development and learning in general is best fostered through home languages. Several commentators on the issue of medium of instruction in the multilingual post-colonial states of Africa have argued for the use of English to be restricted in favour of African languages (e.g. Barret, 1994; Ferguson, 2000; Phillipson, 1992; Roy Campbell-Makini, 2000; Rubagumya, 1990). This is seen, typically, as a strategy for developing educational performance because a strong grounding in the child's home language contributes to the ultimate successful acquisition of English language and literacy. Consequently, perceptions against

mother-tongue education that exist in the post-apartheid era emanate from apartheid's linguistic ideologies that not all languages are equal, and not from the findings of educational research.

Clearly, in centralising control over education, the government was not only determined to 'remove' access to English from black South Africans, but also aimed to establish parity between English and Afrikaans. As a case in point, the Bantu Education Act was, among other things, a 'desperate' determination to curtail the 'threatening' influence of English in black schools. As Banda (2000) correctly points out, 'they were hostile towards playing second fiddle to English'. In effect, to strengthen the status of Afrikaans, white English mother-tongue teachers were phased out from Bantu Education leaving black learners with inexperienced teachers. Accordingly, Lanham says

Social segregation, the removal of white teachers from classrooms including mission schools, and the denial of entry to so-called white English universities, confined the black child's encounter with English to the classroom with teachers, themselves products of deprived learning experiences with little gained in knowledge of teaching methods or competence in English from training colleges, which had suffered the same way as the schools (1996, p. 27).

Resentment over grossly inferior facilities, learning conditions, teachers, curriculum and textbooks coupled with the enforced use of Afrikaans medium of instruction in black schools exploded into major student protest in June 1976. The struggle against Afrikaans and in favour of English as the medium of instruction, together with the use of English for resistance politics by the educated black elite, enabled the establishment of English as the language of political liberation (Heugh, 1995). It is not surprising that black learners viewed Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor, opting at the same time for English, a 'language of international value'. Unforeseen and perhaps ironic, choosing English yielded undesired outcomes that still carry on in post-apartheid SA as I show in the next sections. First, the position of an already powerful language, English, became even more superior over both Afrikaans and African languages in the historically disadvantaged schools and communities, i.e. in Black and Indian communities, and has gained significant ground in the Coloured community, previously Afrikaans speaking. For instance, Prabhakaran (1998, p.302) reports that the shift from learning Telugu or any other Indian language, to English in

Indian communities in SA is a conscious decision made by Indian parents for their children because the social identity associated with English is desirable. Along these lines, de Klerk (2000a, p.105) writes that 'shift [from Xhosa] to English is well under way, and is almost irrevocable'. de Klerk's (2000a) study shows that a move towards English in black middle-class communities is made by parents 'from the better-educated and wealthier sectors of society, where they have seen the dividends that come from an "investment" in English' (ibid., p.105). Second, mother-tongue education has since been seen negatively '...as a dead end, a barrier to more advanced learning and a lure to self-destruction' (Kamwangamalu, 2004, p.36). The point is, despite cancellations of apartheid laws and the introduction of the new Language in Education Policy (LiEP) in 1997, the use of languages other than English continues to be equated with poor and inferior education.

### **2.3.2 The Clase Announcements: School Desegregation in South Africa**

Responding to the educational crisis in 1976, some private schools began to admit black children. Racial mixing was becoming the norm in private schools, especially Catholic schools since the Catholic Church undertook to desegregate schools under its control – a stark contravention/breach to the key premise that sustained apartheid. The government could no longer keep proper guard of its glorified policy in education, i.e. complete racial segregation in schools. Children from the emergent black middle class got admission into some of the white private schools. It was clear that what was supposed to be an 'exclusive and elitist' policy was crumbling. In an attempt to deal with adverse policy breakdown, new legislation was announced in October 1990, by Piet Clase, the then minister of education in the apartheid, white, Nationalist government. The aim of the Clase Announcements, as they came to be known, was to allow white schools to enrol black learners legally.<sup>7</sup> The Clase policy of education was implemented by 1991, beginning the official process of desegregating government schools. For the first time, there was now provision for white-registered state schools to enrol students of all races, i.e. children classified as Coloured, Indian

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<sup>7</sup> The official announcement of the Clase policy coincided with the unbanning of liberation organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), South African Communist Party (SACP). And, political leaders such Nelson Mandela were released from prison. Therefore, it could be argued that these Clase Announcements were part of reformist project by the Nationalist government (see Carrim and Soudien, 1999).

or African. Three school models, model A to C<sup>8</sup>, were introduced and schools were invested with the option of choosing an admission model from the three. In other words, schools could make some adjustments to accommodate black learners, or could choose to carry on with business as usual, i.e. maintaining the status quo. In 1992, all former white state schools were converted to model C schools. Model C schools were still entitled to state subsidies but had to raise the rest of their budgets through fees, donations etc. Most importantly, their intake of black learners was limited to no more than 50 percent (see Pampallis, 1991).

The introduction of the Clase Model schooling seemed to suggest a step in the right direction. However, this policy was still inherently problematic - admission of black learners was limited to 'no more than 50%' resulting in educational inequalities now along social class lines. What we read here is concealed unwillingness on the part of the government to open the doors of education to black children. First, admission was rationalised on linguistic terms thus disadvantaging learners who had never been educated in English medium schools. As a result, few learners of races other than white got admission into model C schools. Second, children from working or lower class backgrounds could not get into these well-resourced model C schools owing to high school fees. Thirdly, the limited number of white schools meant that the vast majority of the black learners would remain in all-black schools. Consequently these 'schools were criticised for being economically and socially elite, for being irrelevant to the broader struggle for non-racial education in SA, and for isolating black students from their communities and their political struggle' (Christie, 1992, p. 57). Commenting on the conditions that accompanied the Clase announcements, Carrim and Soudien summarise the situation as follows:

...the 'opening' of white South African schools was achieved in ways that were bent on ensuring continued white privilege and security. This is not surprising because the Clase announcements were framed by the apartheid constitution, which was still in place at the time. At the same time, the Clase announcements explicitly and officially put in place an assimilationist approach. Blatant here were the assumptions that Blacks needed to adopt the white school's cultural ethos, to which they were also expected to adapt (1999, p.157).

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<sup>8</sup> Model A schools were mainly private, with exorbitant fees. Model B schools needed to maintain a white student population of at least 60%. Model C schools are described in the text.

Although racial dynamics have tended to become secondary, a burgeoning corpus of literature (e.g. Carim, 2003; Christie, 1990; Gaganakis, 1992; Mda, 2004; Naidoo, 1996; Soudien, 1998; Vally and Dalamba 1999) continues to reflect heightened racial, linguistic and cultural discrimination in racially desegregated schools. As will be apparent in this thesis, school desegregation and school integration remain a challenge even in the post-apartheid era despite commitment to learner access, language rights and social redress that have accompanied the process of democratisation.

#### **2.4 Policy and Reality: Post-Apartheid Education**

In 1994, SA embraced and celebrated its first democracy, liberating itself from apartheid marking a massive political change and inaugurating a new educational history. Political power now rested with the black majority and not the white minority, as had been the case for decades. Remarkable as it was, the shift of political power only signalled the first step toward the ‘construction of a strong, multiracial and sustainable order’ (Fiske and Ladd, 2004, p. ix). The democracy also meant that new institutional structures were necessary to transform the self-consciously racist and inequitable political, economic and social structures into a just and fair system. The adoption of the new Constitution in 1996 marked the vision and mission of the new government, emphasising the rights of all people and further affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. Crucial to this was the major task to transform the state of education, based on the progressive values of the new democracy. Just as a racially prescriptive and discriminatory education system had been central to the maintenance of repression, a completely new system that eradicated the residue of apartheid would be essential for the creation of the functioning of democratic society (see Kamwangamalu, 2004, Reagan, 2002). This said, education was not the sole concern; other pressing issues included poverty, employment, health care, housing, and so on.

The reformation and reorganisation of education led to a proliferation of education policies and legislation such as the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act 58 of 1995, South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996, and National Education Policy (NEP) Act 27 of 1996 including the Language in Education Policy (LiEP). At the heart of all these is the need to create a new culture of learning and teaching, moving away from a destructive and self-defeating education system that

discriminated against black learners. The main thrust of the new system is to deracialise education through the promotion of and building of a just and equitable education system for all. Accordingly, SASA opens with the following statement ‘whereas the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation’, a new national system is essential in order ‘to advance the democratic transformation of society, to combat racism and sexism and other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance...and [to] uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators’ (SASA 84 of 1996).

A single unified national system has been established, thus integrating 15 separate education departments that existed under apartheid. To date, education is compulsory for the first time for all learners regardless of their race; all schools, in official policy, are now racially desegregated, and a new LiEP has been in place since 14 July 1997. In line with the constitutional provisions, a policy of multilingualism has been adopted with emphasis on equal treatment and use of eleven official languages<sup>9</sup>. With the LiEP advocating teaching through the medium of the home language (in the early years of schooling) while learning additional languages as subjects, this policy signals a major step towards multilingualism and language maintenance, at least in principle. Multilingualism is defined in more positive terms, seen as a ‘right’ and ‘resource’, rather than a ‘problem’ for learning and development (Heugh, 2002). This additive bilingualism model aims to provide access to, and effective acquisition of additional language(s), without compromising home language(s) in any way<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the school governing bodies, usually inclusive of parents and community members, are also entrusted with the power to decide the language policy of the school in accordance with the South African Schools Act of 1996.

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<sup>9</sup> The eleven official languages of South Africa are Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga.

<sup>10</sup> Note that schools are expected to offer at least one approved language as a subject and learners have the right to choose the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) upon application for admission to a school. They may request the provincial education department to make provision for instruction in the chosen language where no school in the district offers that language as LoLT. The provincial department is to provide education in that teaching and learning in the requested language if there are at least 40 learners in Grades 1 to 6, or 35 in Grades 7 to 12 (DoE, 1997).

Clearly, the LiEP is an admirable and ambitious policy carrying a number of rights and obligations with regard to learners, schools and education departments. Yet there have been a number of factors, constraints and tensions that militate against its realisation. These include socio-historical factors, parents' attitudes, the role of language in education, and recently social class with respect to desegregated schooling. While the LiEP aims to encourage the use of, recognise and develop all SA languages equally, in reality the contrary has been the case (see Alexander, 2004; de Klerk, 2000b, 2002; Kamwangamalu, 2000, 2001; Reagan, 2002). The reality is that the two former official languages i.e. English and Afrikaans are still powerful and privileged, with English increasingly monopolising particular higher domains such as education, the media, and government administration, as I have discussed in section 2.2. Kamwangamalu (2004) makes the following observation

...English and Afrikaans remain central to the administration of the state and its institutions, including education, much as they were in the apartheid era. If anything has changed at all in the use of the two languages in higher domains, it is that English has now become more powerful than Afrikaans and has assumed an unassailable position to the extent that none of its co-official languages can match it (p.132).

English has assumed a 'neutral' stance thus associated with all the positives; it is a 'liberating language' of international value and key to better opportunities. The 'neutral' stance with which English is often associated is contradictory in its definition; it assumes that it has no baggage whatsoever. Hence, its historical role appears to be hardly questioned. African languages are perceived to be underdeveloped and unable to cope with scientific, technical and technological subjects (PRAESA, 1998, p.3). Mda (2004), like Kamwangamalu (2004), pointing to the stark discrepancies between language policy and practice, says that

on paper, all languages are equal and are to be treated equally. In real life...English and Afrikaans, are still held in high esteem by all who aspire to be successful socially and economically (p.182) and consequently there are few incentives for non-African language speakers to learn African languages and for African learners to exercise their rights pertaining to their languages (p.183).

It is not surprising then that there are uneasy attitudes about the use of African languages as media of instruction in education. After all, they are an economic and political disadvantage with no obvious incentives. Without being simplistic we can argue that all this stems from the legacy of colonialism, oppression and complex



power relations, and resonates with what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981), almost two decades ago, has called 'the colonised mind' - that is to say, most African language speakers simply do not think that their languages can or should be used for higher-order functions. Talking about the 'strange relationship' between African languages and English in education, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981) in *Decolonising the Mind* concludes that English should be decentred and African languages should be put at the centre.

Equally important to our cultural renaissance is the teaching and study of African languages. We have already seen what the colonial system does: impose its tongue on the subject races, and then downgrade the vernacular tongues of the people. By so doing they make the acquisition of their tongue a status symbol, anyone who learns it begins to despise the peasant majority and their barbaric tongues...That study of our own languages is important for a meaningful self image is increasingly being realised (ibid., p.72).

The rapid diversification of previously linguistically and racially homogenous schools i.e. White, Coloured and Indian mainly due to the movement of Black learners into these schools as well as parents' attitudes, both black and white, has further complications in the linguistic terrain. Not only do these have huge implications for integration, learning and literacy development but also for theories of learning and teaching English as an additional language in SA. Despite the political will endorsing multilingualism white parents, and to some extent Indian and Coloured parents, tend to view multilingual education as a threat to their privileged positions and as such equate it with the lowering of standards. For them the status quo, i.e. teaching and learning in English and/or Afrikaans (usually the learners' home language), should continue. This is understandable, though regrettable, since their education has always been in these languages of power. In effect mother tongue education for white children remains a given. Perhaps rightly so, considering the history, African parents favour English as the sole language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in schools. They want their children to have access to education and the socioeconomic benefits associated with English. Note that though the use of home language is especially encouraged (as the LoLT) in the foundation phase (Grades 1-3), research studies show a general tendency for parents to support the introduction of English language instruction even earlier, from Grade 1 (e.g. Vinjevold, 1999; Probyn *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, Bot and Pillay's (2004, p.23) research confirms the increased demand for

English in education – 56% of primary schools used an African language as the LoLT in 1999, whereas in 2001 the figure had dropped to 30%. This trend is in complete contrast to the progressive principle of ‘...using more than one language for learning and teaching and/or by offering additional languages as subjects and/or applying special immersion or maintenance programmes’ (Department of Education, 1997, p.8). Furthermore, Bot and Pillay’s (2004, p.23) research statistics confirm the findings of Granville *et al.* (1998) who point out that

South African parents believe correctly, however unfortunate this may be, that English also has material power. It provides entry to the middle class, to middle class jobs and to middle class pay packets (ibid., p. 258).

Drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of ‘symbolic power’ (attitudes) and the ‘material power’ (economic capital) they claim and further warn that ‘we need to be cautious about denying people, particularly working class people, access to the language that will give them the most social mobility’ (ibid.). Much as this may appear affirmative, this perception equally suggests a seeming impossibility in as far as access to ‘standard English’ (the variety associated with upward mobility) is concerned. We know for instance that not all varieties of English are equal. Those varieties that are associated with ‘white English and ex-model C schooling’ are seen to be prestigious and therefore in great demand as opposed to those English varieties that are seen to reflect black education (see for example, Gaganakis, 1992; McKinney, 2007a). Moreover, the fact that English is often equated with access, social class and mobility is somewhat misleading because it assumes that black learners have similar access to English, and access to the same kind of English, as white South Africans or that learning through the medium of English can translate into English proficiency and therefore literacy.

The above perspectives about English in post-apartheid SA, inevitably lead to complex questions about what ‘kind’ of English counts particularly in a context where the majority are not first language speakers of the language. Does the type of English that children learn at school really carve their way into middle class positions? It is perhaps unsurprising that language, and more recently the issue of class, remains the most contested issue in post-apartheid education. As I argue in this thesis, the hegemonic position of English, under post-apartheid’s progressive LiEP and school

integration policies, has emerged as one of the powerful tools for various inequalities. This said, scholars such as John Honey (1983, 1997) and Randolph Quirk (1988, 1990) have taken a purist approach to language and have argued that ‘standard English’ should be the dominant language of learning and instruction worldwide. This rather limited view of language has been criticised for its failure to acknowledge the diverse contexts in which English is used (e.g. Giroux 1983, Kachru, 1992a, 1992b; Makoni, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), in particular, how the pragmatic and sociolinguistic situations, including the complex ways in which both teacher and students interact within the context of schooling impact on language. We know from local and international research that socio-political or historical backgrounds, geographical locations, accents and social differences eventually shape the pragmatics of the language. As a consequence, new varieties of English or ‘world Englishes’ have been realised each with speech variations appropriate to the social norms of the specific context. According to Kachru (1992a, 1992b) these new varieties of English emerge through what he calls ‘nativization’ a concept he uses to refer to the indigenization of English. A number of scholars have identified the nativization of English across the world, hence references such as ‘Indianization’ (Kachru, 1992a) used to illustrate English in India, ‘Nigerian English’ (Bamgbose, 1982, 1998), ‘Black South African English’ [BSAE], ‘White South African English’ [WSAE], ‘Indian South African English’ [ISAE], ‘Coloured English’ and ‘Afrikaans English’ (e.g. Kasanga, 2006; McKinney, 2007a; Mesthrie, 2003), to cite only a few.

Inevitably, this issue of labels or ‘what kind of English’, and how these relate to education, recalls some of the classic studies in sociolinguistics (Labov, 1968, 1972), and in sociology of education (Bernstein, 1971, 1972, 1973a, 1973b). My aim is to highlight the role of English in the production and distribution of legitimate cultural and linguistic resources, as well as in the construction of legitimate identities or ‘school identities’. Labov’s famed research ‘*Language in the Inner City*’, a study of non-standard dialects, and its influence on learning to read, revealed the complexities around classifications such as Black English Vernacular (BEV). He showed that many classroom teachers associated BEV with negative stereotypes even though it was a common dialect spoken throughout the United States. In an interview with Lois Rosen, Labov (1979) argued that

the primary reason for the failure of the schools to educate black children does not lie in the fact that black children have a different language and therefore cannot learn Standard English. Rather we find that the stereotype the teacher already has about black children is triggered into action by the teacher's unconscious reaction to the child's speech behavior' (1979, p.16).

Bernstein used the sociolinguistic theory of language code to examine social class differences in language, and implications for education. Bernstein (1972) set out to explore how 'the class system has affected the distribution of knowledge' so that 'only a tiny percentage of the population has been socialized into knowledge at the level of meta-languages of control and innovation, whereas the mass of the population has been socialized into knowledge at the level of context-tied operations' (1972, p.163). In his first volume of *Class, Codes and Control* (1973a), Bernstein explained the social class communication codes of working class and middle class children through the introduction of the concepts of restricted code and elaborated code. For Bernstein, the working class, because of the conditions in which they are raised and socialised, use what he terms *a restricted code*, while the middle class children become socialised into *an elaborated code*. Although both the restricted and elaborated codes are context dependent, the former is particularistic whereas the latter is universalistic. Bernstein's early work on communication codes was mired in controversy, as some of his critics (see Bourdieu, 1991; Danzig, 1995; Giroux, 1983) labelled it a deficit theory alleging that he was arguing that the language of working class children is deficient. For instance, Giroux (1983) argues that Bernstein's use of the terms restricted and elaborated codes exemplifies a deterministic view of reproduction, while Bourdieu (1991) claims that his 'fetishizing of the legitimate language' fails to link 'this social product to the social conditions of its production and reproduction' (p.53). While I agree that Bernstein's view here is limited in terms of contextualising how social reproduction occurs and how it may be resisted, I agree with Glyn Williams (1992) that 'whatever its limitations, the work of Bernstein and his associates...has served to demonstrate the role of the education system in producing and reproducing the written standard' (p.143). In fact, like Labov, Bernstein showed that the elaborated code of the middle class is the dominant code of schooling. Hence, working class children become disadvantaged, as they are perceived to lack the required code. I concur with Labov (1972, 1979) and Makoni (1999) that labels/classifications such as elaborated and restricted codes or BEV may have the unintended consequence of discriminating and classifying children's

language experiences as either poor or deficient thus raising social justice questions about opportunity and difference in schooling. My analysis of the data in chapters 5 and 6 will show how institutional discursive constructions such as ‘they come here with no English’, ‘they have no established language’, ‘they have no language’, and the notions of ‘good English’ ‘quality English’ or ‘proper English’ projected as the ultimate cultural achievement, function to include or exclude children at school.

With reference to the SA situation, the picture that emerges from the usage of categorisations or labels such as Black South African English (BSAE) and White South African English (WSAE), is worrying, given the history, because it seems to take us back to ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ as defining factors for language behaviour. The research that I have discussed above suggests that people or languages fit neatly into these categories. It is my view that these labels are only helpful in as far as describing the (race-ethnic motivated) different Englishes in SA, but not helpful in exploring the dynamics, synergies and differences within, and outside, these categories. For instance, it has become evident that some black children who attend ex-model C schools or former white English medium schools speak English with an accent that is close to if not the same as what is termed WSAE. This type of English has come to be known as ‘model C English’ – a popular descriptor used to label particular brands of English and accents used by black learners who attend suburban, former model C schools. The obvious question to ask is where do these black children fit, exactly, in the scheme of things? Note that this model C English, as a socially unequal distributed resource, is often associated with qualities such as prestige, sophistication, elitism whereas the English spoken by black children in black schools tends to be seen in negative terms (see for example, Gaganakis, 1992).

Furthermore, a particularly far-reaching language factor reported on by Blommaert *et al.* (2005), Gaganakis (1992), Kapp (2000), Makoni and Meinhof (2004) and Rudwick (2008) is that while English remains an elitist code, not all forms/types of English count or pave the way into upward social mobility. There are some parallels here with Bernstein and Labov’s classifications of language behaviour discussed above. Blommaert’s *et al.* paper ‘*Peripheral Normativity*’ reports on the classroom practices, including English literacy, in a Coloured township high school near Cape Town, South Africa. For both teachers and learners in this school English was seen as the

‘most important’ language in SA, and ultimately as an instrument of spatial and social mobility. Similarly, Kapp’s (2000) paper ‘*With English You Can Go Everywhere*’ uncovered a great demand for English proficiency in a Black township high school. She notes that

...for these students, proficiency in English signifies future mobility and transcendence of the boundaries of the township. Their responses are marked by a strong sense of the instrumental value of English in their pursuit of individual, material goals outside the township. English appears to carry the symbolic value of a key or gatekeeper, depending on whether or not one is proficient (Kapp, 2000, p.240).

In the same way, Rudwick’s (2008) findings that 95% of black high schools learners in a South African township indicated that English represents and functions as a means of empowerment. She concludes that

it has an important instrumental function in the lived experience of the learners, and is perceived as *the* ticket for success. Conscious understanding of contemporary South African reality, including the undisputed high economic value of English, shapes learners’ aspirations of becoming proficient in English (ibid., p.110, emphasis in original).

Despite ideals that the participants shared about English, Blommaert *et al.* (2005) provide some revealing examples of learners’ writing in English. This is what two learners wrote in their language-mind map task:

‘cause over the race in this country can understand English and we can communicate with everyone in South Africa or in any other country’

‘The language that I like at school to learn English because that Everybody they lean English because is a very nice language to Everyone that they want to speak English’ (2005, pp.396-7).

Blommaert *et al.* argue that the above forms of English writing display features of ‘grassroots literacy’ and peripheral normativity as they call it. Grassroots literacy represents ‘one particular literacy ‘*culture*’ with a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis related literacy cultures, including that of elite, normative literacy’ (p. 388). This view about the local forms of literacy echoes a number of literacy studies research, that have taken a socio-cultural perspective to argue that language and literacy should be seen as situated practices, that is, in the context of local communities in which they

function (cf. Gee, 1990; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1995). This said, Blommaert *et al.* summarise the situation in this way

it is clear that the ‘English’ both learners have in mind is not the ‘English’ they articulate in their answers; there is a gap between ‘their’ English and ‘the’ English considered the most important language in South Africa (2005, p. 397, emphasis in original).

Along these lines, Gaganakis (1992) study of black minority learner experiences in elite non-racial private schools in Johannesburg pointed out that “being ‘white-white’ is associated with speaking ‘proper English’ within the schools” (p. 51). She concludes that this ‘proper English’ or ‘well-accented English’, as opposed to those forms of English that are seen as ‘being black’, enabled learners to perceive themselves as having acquired the requisite cultural (linguistic) capital necessary within non-racial schools (*ibid.*). We are immediately faced with a dilemma here about what is ‘good English’ and what is ‘bad English’ – an important question that I will address in the following chapters. Studies by Blommaert *et al.* (2005) and Kapp (2000) provide some useful insight into the kinds of English ideologies that circulate in school institutions, and the extent to which they shape children’s language experiences. As I illustrate in chapter 6, those black multilingual children in my study who have ‘embodied’ the monolithic English linguistic habitus, as expected by the school, are awarded with symbolic capital such as academic certificates/credentials. Chapter 6 will further illustrate that the use of ‘well-accented’ or the ‘well-presented’ English is perceived by both teachers and learners as the marker of success as well as a way of ensuring particular status (e.g. that one is clever, proficient and therefore academically successful) in the school. Hence, I argue that this school, despite its multicultural and multilingual learner population, assimilates children into monolithic linguistic ideologies and practices under the guise of integration. Against this backdrop, it is perhaps unsurprising that only specific forms of English, knowledge of English and displays of these forms and knowledge, which reflect an ‘embodiment’ of institutional practices and ideologies have particular symbolic value. That is, these forms and knowledge carry significant prestige and further serve as an identity marker in the school. Thus, the question of what linguistic resources afford which children what identities remains pertinent in my study.

The fact that monolithic ideologies and discourses prevail and establish some English 'brands' as the natural order in multilingual settings such as the desegregated school in this study further 'raises questions of social justice, as such ideology potentially excludes and discriminates against those who are either unable or unwilling to fit the monoglot standard' (Blackledge, 2000, p.25). As I show in chapter 4, language ideologies and discourse that legitimise English/knowledge resources are rarely contested within the institution itself, and outside, due to the hegemonic position that English is bestowed with in SA, and internationally. One central part of my argument, critical to contemporary ethnography, is that looking at English ideologies, and related practices, as situated cultural sets of beliefs and ideas is fruitful in the context of SA where these dominant ideologies (about which language really matters) seem to militate against official policies of school desegregation and school integration - see discussion in section 2.2.1. Moreover, we will begin to understand, as Irvine (1989, p.255) puts it 'the cultural systems of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests'.

Furthermore, it would appear there is a somewhat close fit between the overwhelming use of English in education, and its increasing use in home environments. The use of English has been uncovered in home environments thus gradually 'replacing' home languages – there are some exceptions though as the trend seems more so in urban areas (and middle class) than rural areas (cf. Calteaux, 1995, Slabbert and Finlayon, 2000). One may note here, De Klerk's (2000) research in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, reports on efforts by Xhosa speaking parents to facilitate language shift at home, a domain that was the preserve of African languages. She shows that families play a major role in the marginalisation of African languages and their use as media of teaching and learning. Although she did not look at classroom practices, her study provides evidence of language use at home with implications for education through a home language. She reports that English is increasingly becoming the language of the home, and that parents encourage language shift among their children, 'often in subtractive bilingual environments, where the risk is not only of loss of the first language, but of consequential loss of loyalty to the home culture' (ibid., p.199). In an earlier study, she came to a similar conclusion that 'black people widely believed that their children already 'knew' their own indigenous languages, and since these languages did not facilitate access to participation and mobility in wider society,



they are not perceived as being important in education as English was' (de Klerk, 1997, p.99).

#### **2.4.1 School Integration**

The centrality of desegregated schooling in continued inequalities in education is undeniable. While the *de jure* equity is enshrined in policy, the *de facto* inequalities of apartheid schooling and its ideologies have been difficult to dismantle, even after thirteen years of post-apartheid government. Despite the well-intentioned policies on racial integration in public schools, many scholars have highlighted the problematic of defining and effecting macro-policy to change what happens and the practices within desegregated schools. Shireen Motala maintains that change dictated from above, however laudable,

often fails because it ignores the culture and the context of the schools where the change is meant to occur. While the policy suggests that the goals of change are accepted and defined in consensual ways, the reality is that social conceptions about change are driven by dissimilar experiences of 'race', class, gender and geographical location (2000, p.112).

This disjuncture between policy and practice therefore poses a challenge that is not peculiar to South Africa as it is pertinent internationally as well. This is especially the case given the centrality of complex questions of difference, diversity, language, religion, race and racism worldwide. South Africa is unique because racism is a structural feature of society and its portrait is historically framed by a particular set of socio-political ideological forces, and the institutionalised apartheid education was intended to uphold and reinforce this racial capitalist system. Accordingly, Vally and Zafar (2002) argue that

racial discrimination is woven deeply into the warp and woof of South African society and nothing short of social transformation can overcome it...racial inequality in schools is neither merely an aberration nor an excrescence, but is structurally linked to wider social relations and the economic, political and social fabric of society. Nor is racism simply about cultural ignorance or misunderstanding (2002, p.55).

The point is that racial desegregation in South African schools has to be understood in its historical context, that is, with reference to the past, as well as the present, socio-political and economic relationships and patterns of inequality in society as a whole. It

is important to realise that 'racism in education does not constitute an autonomous form of oppression, but rather is inextricably linked to power relations and reproduced in conjunction with class, gender, *language* and ethnic inequalities' (Vally and Zafar, 2002, p.55, my emphasis).

Although an integrated model of education is potentially positive and one likely to achieve redress and equity, schools still experience problems of reconciliation and interaction between diverse cultural and linguistic groups. Barriers to racial integration in schools are manifold, including different educational experiences associated with separate geographical locations, social class, differences in culture, and language constitutes a further problem. Black learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are forced to seek better education in former white schools, and to some extent Indian and Coloured schools, often well equipped with many educational facilities. Large numbers of these learners travel daily from townships to desegregated city and suburban schools while white and middle class learners remain geographically close. Studies such as those by Dawson (2007), Mda (2004), and Vinjevold (1999) have shown that the language issue remains a thorny subject because many schools are determined to retain English as the LoLT, and the main language of socialisation, despite the change in the profiles of learners. Consequently, minimal tokenistic or superficial changes, if any, have been made to amend the language policies in desegregated schools. Inevitably, the extent to which these schools have changed in practice is questionable as research on diversity and racial integration continue to show patterns and trends of limited or no change in the cultures and practices of these schools.

This research has further uncovered lack of coherent and co-ordinated programmes which address issues of diversity and inequality, in particular the interplay between race and other types of discrimination based on class, gender, language and culture (e.g. Carrim, 2003; Naidoo, 1996; Vally and Dalamba, 1999; Zafar, 1998). In an overview of the history of desegregation in schools since the late 1990's when the official process of desegregating government schools began, Carrim and Soudien (1999) reported that the dominant model of integration in SA schooling has been one of assimilation. This is so because black learners are expected to adapt and adopt the cultural status quo of the school, and become proficient users of English, irrespective

of their diverse backgrounds. As is the case in my research setting, English and Afrikaans continue to be the 'official' languages, with the blessing of the school governing body (discussion in chapter 4). It is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of black learners in former white schools continue to live in separate and unequal worlds but also remain 'outsiders' culturally and linguistically.

Pam Christie's study on open Catholic schools, in the period 1976-1986, for instance illustrates that '[c]ommitment to racial mixing in schools expressed in pupils' interview discourse did not necessarily point to non-racism or anti-racism; nor did it necessarily mean that race had ceased to operate as a classificatory principle for pupils...' (1990, p.490). To this end Christie's findings on racism still echo in contemporary research. The latest corpus of studies indicates lack of meaningful integration and cultural alienation and discrimination. All of this contribute to the situation of 'us' and 'them' (Soudien, 1997, p.11), 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' (Soudien *et al.*, 2004, p.23) while Vally and Dalamba (1999, p.22) report that black learners 'become invisible'. It is not surprising that the majority of schools remain 'uni or mono-racial' (Nkomo *et al.*, 2004, p.7). Soudien's 1997 research in a Cape Town Coloured school demonstrates the extent to which isiXhosa speaking learners experienced what he calls 'othering'; simply meaning not belonging. As in former white English medium schools, African learners had trouble, because Afrikaans is the dominant language, resulting in feelings of alienation. Compounding the matter further, these learners were barred from using isiXhosa; a native language to most of them, amongst themselves. Reasons included the fact that teachers could not speak or understand the language. Hence, they misjudged the behaviour of the isiXhosa-speaking learners. Soudien concludes that 'what African children have to offer in their identity kits is not always compatible with the images transacted in and by the school' (1997, p.1). Ntshakala concurs that 'black children in these schools straddle two worlds but belong to neither' (1997, p.5). Drawing on Nkomo, McKinney and Chisholm (2004) I ask the following questions: What is integration? What might integration look like in a diverse country like SA? Who is supposed to be integrated, into what and by whom? Although these are all interesting questions, I will make the relevant links where necessary and discuss only those significant factors and issues pertaining to this study. In the following sub-section, I discuss the issue of

assimilation and integration in education with reference to the desegregation of schools in SA.

#### **2.4.2 Assimilation**

Evidence from SA classrooms indicates that desegregating schools does not necessarily translate into integration. None of the studies report on non-racism or anti-racism in these schools; instead all point to the pervasive tendency towards assimilation (e.g. Carrim, 2003, Christie, 1990, Soudien *et al.* (2004), Vally and Dalamba, 1999). Soudien (2004) in his analysis of the process of integration in SA schools makes the following observation

...the most critical outcome of the process of integration has been that of assimilation. While there has been a flight of white children out of former black schools, there has been no movement whatsoever in the direction of black schools...children of colour have moved in large numbers towards the English-speaking sector of the former white schools. This clearly suggests that the social nature of education has changed quite dramatically. The change, however, has been complex and has made it possible for the expanded middle class, which now includes people of colour, to consolidate its position of privilege. Working class and working poor people, conversely, continue to experience high degrees of vulnerability and even discrimination' (ibid., pp.89-90).

I conceptualise assimilation as a non-accommodative situation where minority learners, or black learners in previously white schools as in the case in this thesis, have to 'take on' the dominant culture and ethos of the school; and have no option. In other words, the socio-cultural context of the school is framed by the norms, beliefs, traditions and values of the dominant group. Soudien (1998) says that part of the project of schooling in SA 'is to homogenize the subjects who inhabit it' (p.8). Naidoo (1996, p.12) mentions key presumptions in the assimilationist position - that subordinate groups are seen to represent a threat to the high standards of the dominant group. This view perpetuates the dominant group as culturally superior, and 'other' learners should strive to enter that 'world of opportunity'. The overwhelmingly hegemonic assimilationist practice is exacerbated by the fact that ex-model C schools are seen as 'the vehicle for entry into the middle class' (Soudien, 1998, p.26). Accordingly, Soudien (2004) concludes that

...the consequences of assimilation for subordinate groups are dire. They are expected both to give up their own identities and cultures and, critically, to acknowledge the superiority of the culture, and by implication, the identities of the group into whose social context they are moving (2004, p.96).

Research to date tends to focus on race and/or language as key to defining integration. Without undermining the importance of these factors, it seems we need a more 'diversified' and 'inclusive' approach. The notion of difference is critical to understanding integration in SA – issues of cultural identity, class, race, gender, sexuality, religion and so on. It is clear that education in SA was never prepared in how to deal with multi-racial and –lingual integration. As Naidoo observes 'the current ethos of a school, the nature of the interaction and existing patterns and institutional features and policies of school may limit or facilitate such integration' (1996, p.11). Education is seen to be 'accessible' yet there are no clear guidelines and/or national policy about dealing with difference and diversity. It is not my intention to underplay the complexity of the issues that confront teachers in all classrooms. I concur with Naidoo (1996) that integration 'requires fundamental changes in...personal attitudes and behaviour patterns. It requires major changes of deep-seated attitudes and behaviour among learners and teachers of minority and majority groups' (p. 11). That is, a situation that promotes equality of access as well as of educational opportunity for all, without presumptions that one group is better than the other is. At present, this is still elusive in the majority of schools. School and classroom policies and practices continue to equate integration with admitting and accepting learners from other racial groups. Beyond access, as reviewed in Moletsane (1999) schools respond to their changing demographics by adopting approaches that allow them to maintain and fortify the existing ethos and culture/status quo.

Vally and Dalamba's (1999) wide survey of desegregated schools conducted in 1998 documents social relations between learners and staff, and the dominant racial groups and the minority groups. They conclude that the predominant model in school desegregation is the assimilationist approach. To quote one of the students 'I feel that if pupils from other races want to come to our school then they must adjust to the culture and norms of the school' (ibid., p.24). These feelings of 'our' and 'they' clearly demonstrate that dominant groups expected the 'other' learners to change; after all they came to their territory: 'while 'tolerance' is espoused, little effort is

made to accommodate the differences of new learners, or the issues around discrimination or prejudice' (ibid.). Christie's (1999) study in open Catholic schools comes to the same conclusion. She states that 'the assumption on the part of nearly one fifth of the black pupils [was] that it should be they who adjusted to the basically white schools' (ibid., p. 50). This points out that assimilationism is taken for granted, and as one of the officials said there was 'no desire to destroy what we value and have taken years to build up' (ibid., p.128). Such understanding of integration has received wide criticism, as it tends to purport the hegemonic status of assimilation. That is, one that privileges the middle class, one that suggests that one group is better than the others, and require black children to shed off their 'being' and replace that with the white ways. Following this, Soudien (2004) makes this observation

While these [desegregated] schools promote a strong non-racial ethos, and present themselves as 'schools for people' and not 'schools for coloureds' or 'schools for blacks', they do not have the analytic sophistication to engage with issues of identity. Much of the discussion on race is polemical rather than substantial and interrogative. They end up, as a result, working with notions of identity that young people are simply required to take on (ibid., p.102).

In line with this, Gordon and Barkhuizen (1994, p.74) say

It is a disturbing thought that for many people 'open schooling' may simply mean allowing black students into formerly white schools without adapting the syllabuses, the teaching methods or patterns of classroom interaction in order to facilitate them. Or worse still, without adapting their attitudes to different languages and to the people who speak them.

Though schools have begun to 'deracialise', i.e. integrate racially or break away from the rigid racial compartments, it seems true that integration is far from being realised. The pictures of racial tensions and contradictions evidenced in the literature above, as well as essentialised ideological conceptions of difference, i.e. the socio-political relationships between the black and the white groups, have bedevilled the transformation in these schools. The situation of assimilation in SA schools supports Squelch's (1993) view advanced against multicultural education that it 'emphasises racial and cultural differences which only serves to foster negative attitudes and prejudices' (in Mda 2000, p.55). Drawing on Kalantzis and Cope (1999), McKinney (2007b) voices concerns about multicultural education trends internationally, e.g. in the USA, UK and Australia. The writer points out those two approaches that of

assimilation and cultural pluralism have become the norm for addressing and managing issues of diversity in schooling. The melting pot ideology in the USA is an illustrative case of assimilation. For instance, diversity or difference is often defined in negative terms, and a homogenous sense of identity associated with loyalty to the state is fostered. In cultural pluralism, endeavours are made to recognise differences and similarities, while at the same time leaving the language, culture, traditions and ethos of the school intact. Referring to integrated schooling in SA, Mda (2000) makes the following observation 'we have...come to understand that treating unequal people equally or different people similarly, is as discriminatory as promoting inequities, or treating equal people unequally, or similar people differently' (p.55). It could be argued then that the post-apartheid system is still fraught with political difficulty to rid itself of historically stratified and unequal education, and social relations. Despite liberal official rhetoric that explicitly supports diversity, the existing dominant ideologies and practices in former white schools work towards homogenising black learners through assimilation.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the ideologically motivated history of education, and structural legacies, in an attempt to contextualise the process and policies of racial school desegregation in South Africa. This contextual analysis is critical as it illustrates continuities and disjunctures between the state policy and actual practices within schools. Furthermore, I looked at the role of English in a society in transition. I have argued that the hegemonic position of English, and its associated identities, should be understood with reference to this history and to present-day political and economic disadvantage, and other forms of inequality in South Africa. I have shown how complex, and often contradictory, dominant ideologies about English in education may serve to disadvantage those children for whom English is not a first language. Desegregated schools aspire to promote linguistic equality, non-racial, gender sensitive values and practices. However, the contrary is often true. There remains a strong tradition in desegregated, formerly white, Indian and coloured schools to carry on with 'business as usual' while 'other' learners are expected to simply comply. Reasons for the current state rest in many factors including the dominant racial and subordinate groups with the former expected to change and adapt;

but not the dominant. Hence, the ideals of multicultural and multilingual education are not being realised.

The following chapter builds on this chapter introducing further literature upon which this thesis is based. In chapter 3 I will mainly discuss the works of Pierre Bourdieu's whose theoretical concepts – field, habitus and capital- are central to my understanding of 'black children in a white school'. I will draw on these concepts to examine the extent to which the dominant discourses of school privilege certain forms of knowledge, regulate access to those forms of knowledge, and produce unequal social relations. I will also draw on other authors such as Jan Blommaert, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, among others to explore the relationship between language ideology and identity.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapters two and three, I have introduced the concept of language ideology and hegemony in order to show how English is discursively constructed and framed both in wider social contexts as well as in micro-settings such as ex-model C schools. The next chapter 4 for instance, will illustrate the extent to which English is ‘comfortably’ placed at Johannesburg Primary (JP). Moreover, we will see how this school, by means of value-laden language discourses and practices, locates multilingual black children in their early years of education in terms of how they should imagine themselves as bona-fide members of this community. It is not my intention here to make broad claims about the macro and micro connections, as I have discussed this in my introductory chapter. Rather, I see small-scale action or daily classroom interaction moments linked to and imbued with cultural, political and ideological discourses. As such, classroom interactions and practices are neither neutral, nor necessarily benign, but are linked to contentious histories of status, authority and power of languages. It is my contention that desegregated schooling is overwhelmingly assimilationist; it entails an immersion into highly ideological traditions of education by way of school habitus and the validation of certain forms of cultural and linguistic capital, as I shall discuss in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into two complementary sections. First, I discuss Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice to provide a perspective from which this study is carried out. Bourdieu’s vast body of work offers invaluable insights into social and educational reproduction and change, making it particularly appropriate for a socio-political context affected by far-reaching political changes such as South Africa. And his attention to the notion of power and its functioning, that is the extent to which it regulates behaviour and possibilities within the education field, has also motivated me to draw on his works. The prominence of educational systems in the maintenance and reproduction of social and cultural inequality remains critical. While educational settings, like JP, have become increasingly multicultural and multilingual it seems that

not all knowledge, representational resources, skills or dispositions are valued in the same way.

Second, in theorising language and identity, I draw on the post-structuralist frameworks of Michel Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980) and his notion that subjects or identities are produced within and through discourses, and are socially and historically situated. Considering this, I will explore how learners are constituted and constructed as particular subjects in moment-to-moment interactions. The take up different positions across space and time suggests that identities are both fluid and dynamic. Thus I will also consider the works of Judith Butler (1990, 1997) and Jan Blommaert's (2005) to examine the extent to which learners negotiate and perform identities.

For this purpose, I derive my key conceptual tools from Bourdieu's description of the economy of practice, especially his notions of field or linguistic market, linguistic capital and linguistic habitus. I will draw on his concept of field or market to argue that school classrooms are discursive spaces in which certain language/knowledge resources (and linguistic habitus or identity) are produced in a regulated way, and that some resources are rendered meaningful as cultural capital and others are not. Because this market attributes value to certain linguistic products and not others, this space allows for competition over access to resources. In this way then, I will analyse classroom interaction as a political site of dispute and contest over unequal distribution of resources, and as a site of identity positions and position taking. From this perspective, I will argue that classroom interaction is a powerful contributor to educational stratification. The main aim of this study is to uncover ways in which specific English/knowledge practices 'mutate' into different forms of inequalities in school classrooms. In other words, what sorts of knowledge/language are seen to have what I call a 'springboard effect' – how do certain resources serve to privilege and disadvantage multilingual children in grade one classrooms? It is important to point out that I see language as *the* 'lynch-pin'. That is, a means by which academic abilities, opportunities, possibilities, behaviour and identity are shaped in powerful but unpredictable ways. I concur with Heller and Martin-Jones (2001, p.3) that

language is important as *one way* in which knowledge is constructed and displayed as a resource that becomes important in and of itself as a means of gaining or controlling access to other resources. It is also important as a means for masking the relations of power embedded in these processes (my emphasis).

Thus I see language practices and language ideologies as intertwined functions of social interaction – this complex and indeterminate relationship produces, establishes and sustains certain ideas and beliefs about what knowledge/language is legitimate, which identities are ‘normal’ and how learners should behave within the context of the school. For instance, Coward and Ellis (1977, p.1) state that: ‘because all the practices that make up social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place in which the social individual is constructed’.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of Bourdieu’s theory of practice in order to situate this study of ‘black children in a white school’ within this framework. Concepts drawn from Bourdieu can contribute to an increased understanding of the dynamics of social interaction and social relations in transforming education, especially those organised around or emerging from ideological interests within institutions such as JP. In the following paragraphs, I discuss Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus, capital and symbolic power upon which my analysis is based. These concepts will be discussed in turn. However, it is important to realise that they are interrelated and form part of Bourdieu’s practice theory. In this respect, my discussion will attempt to draw on a number of Bourdieu’s elaborate works that are relevant to my study.

### **3.2 Bourdieu and the South African Context**

It is important to mention at the outset that despite Bourdieu’s debunking of conventional approaches to educational institutions and social class, and his theory of practice continue to attract a notably mixed reception and critical remarks by commentators (e.g. Giroux, 2001; Jenkins, 2002, King, 2000; Nash, 1990). These range from philosophical concerns to methodological arguments. My own concerns relate to the applicability of Bourdieu’s theory as a conceptual framework in the SA context. I am aware that his theories, and concepts of habitus, capital and field; have been worked out in articles and chapters in different social fields. It should be noted that the context in which these concepts were developed and the context in which they

will be put to use remains pertinent to this study. This is not to say that Bourdieu's concepts are irrelevant to the SA context. However prudence and a critical approach is necessary in transporting and adapting these notions.

Bourdieu turned to post-World War Two, French (and his experiences in Algeria) society for empirical data where societal, cultural and class differences were prominent. Perhaps this is still the case, considering the existing differences in the educational system. This brings us to question whether Bourdieu's concerns and categories of cultural capital are still as marked, not only in France but in other contexts such as SA. As I pointed out in chapter 2, SA is characterised by a complex post-apartheid political change, not only limited to education but socio-culturally as well. The point is, unlike France, where Bourdieu's data comes from, SA history may be seen as somewhat different owing to, but not limited to, African, Western and postcolonial concerns. For instance, although implied, the issue of race is simply not visible or present in Bourdieu's analysis of socio-cultural interactions. Another issue relates to the notion of cultural capital. For Bourdieu everyone possess cultural capital (whether linguistic or otherwise), and as capital holders people seek profit. This raises the following central question that I hope to address in this study – what happens in a situation where subjects, such as black children in a former white institution, are 'automatically' deemed to lack linguistic capital, and are recognised as such by the system of education right at the beginning of their formal education? I will elaborate on these concerns about which language resources are privileged and which ones are not, in my discussion throughout this thesis.

### **3.3 An Overview: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

Long a dominant scholar in French social science, Pierre Bourdieu's astonishing range of empirical topics and theoretical themes<sup>11</sup> has increasingly influenced international scholarship. He has been a major figure in the development of a social theory, which seeks to transcend theoretical oppositions between objectivism and subjectivism, culture and society, structure and action. Throughout this work, we find a sociological revamping of the notion of practice, which he uses as an organising concept in social research. Moreover, because of his distinctive approach to the

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<sup>11</sup> His published works, since the 1950's, include topics on education, language, literature, universities, law and philosophy, to mention but a few.

production of sociological knowledge, he remains an influential advocate of reflexive social science. In contrast to conventional theories, reflexive sociological theory looks at cultural practice not only as the consequence of a particular social system or as conscious action by agents but as the complex interplay between social systems and actors. Three fundamental concepts lie at the heart of this project: field, habitus and capital. For the purposes of this thesis, I will also refer to his concepts of symbolic domination and symbolic violence in an attempt to explain the power relations in this context. As shall become evident later in the chapter, a reflexive approach to social life methodologically helps us to understand social reality as a consequence of the conditions of the (re)production of the social structure, of dispositions and attitudes as well as the distribution of the appropriate form of resource/capital. Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity seems to be tied to a notion of social justice, which this thesis aims to address. It is critical for Bourdieu that agents understand the meaning of their actions, for them to become emancipated.

In contrast to classical social theory, Bourdieu argues against much of the approach and method characterised solely as subjective or as objective. For Bourdieu, subjectivist viewpoints tend to place emphasis on agents' beliefs, attitudes, desires and judgements. On the basis of these, agents are then seen to be empowered and endowed enough to decide on their own actions, and to create their world. By contrast, in objectivist views social thought and action is defined only in terms of certain logics – political, cultural, social, material and economic conditions (see Bourdieu 1977b, 1990a, 1991). Here, the gravity of these conditions is evident in the fact that they are considered significantly more powerful than agents' symbolic constructions, dispositions, attitudes, experiences and actions. One of the limitations in these two approaches is the apparent 'neglect' to acknowledge the other in analysis and as such, neither of these positions could be said to adequately articulate social life. For instance, the former centres exclusively on individual knowledge, that is, it is personal and somewhat affective; and may not have significance outside of the agent who holds it. Whereas, the latter only sees the objective conditions in the material world as super-ordinate, with general applicability, and the individual subject is peripherally considered. In the adopted phrase in Grenfell and James, objectivity can be best understood as 'knowledge without a knowing subject' (1998, p.10). It is important to point out that Bourdieu does not reject these viewpoints (objectivism and subjectism)

but rather sees them mutually dialectical rather than distinctly separate. Instead of treating knowledge as uni-dimensional, it should be regarded as multi-faceted because of its plurality. As Bourdieu points out, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977b) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990a), to grasp social life in its entirety we need to understand it in ways that do justice both to objective material, social, and cultural structures as well as to the constituting practices and experiences of individuals or collectively.

Following Bourdieu's theory of practice, I take the view that the relationship between structures and practices is a dialectical one. Bourdieu largely creates a framework in which 'culture' is at the centre of analysis, in order to address the intricate macro-micro relations. That is, the manner in which the organisation of society gives rise to orientations and ideas which in turn shape the organisation of society (Grenfell and James, 1998). In *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Bourdieu writes:

...if a French person talks with an Algerian, or a black American to a WASP, it is not only two person who speak to each other but, through them, the colonial history in its entirety, or the whole history of the economic, political and cultural subjugation of blacks (or women, workers, minorities etc.) in the United States...(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.144).

The point is that social actions and social practice do not exist in a vacuum. These social activities, including education, involve some kind of exchange between individuals and groups within what he aptly calls a 'general science of the economy of practice' (Bourdieu, 1986). The fundamental problematic is that this 'economy of practice' is inextricably tied to the material, political and institutional conditions in which the given social practices operate. In education, he particularly looked at ways in which schools play a part in the social and cultural reproduction of society. Using the Post-World War II French academic system as the basis for his theory of reproduction in the case of education, including his early Algeria 1960 experiences, Bourdieu argues that the culture of the school is a fabrication of the culture of the dominant group in society. Consequently, educational opportunities for children from non-dominant groups become limited, as they are not familiar with linguistic structures and learning models that children from dominant groups are already exposed to. In *Reproduction in Education, Culture and Society*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) demonstrate how differences in family background or familiarity

with bourgeois language translated into different academic performance/competence on academic tests. They argue that the apparently meritocratic educational institutions, draw unevenly on children's experiences. Thus, schools tend to reproduce and legitimate social inequalities. As I shall discuss in section 3.5, this issue of dominant and subordinate class backgrounds vis-à-vis educational opportunities is further illustrated in literacy studies (e.g. Heath, 1983; Phillips, 1983) and critical studies of school knowledge and its transmission (see Bernstein, 1973a, 1973b; Blommaert *et al.*, 2006).

What is important here - a point this thesis aims to address – is the issue of power. In particular, how schools mask and perpetuate social inequalities by engineering some cultural practices so that they appear commonsensical and legitimate. This idea of legitimacy links with Foucault's (1972, 1977) conceptualisation of *normalisation* which I find fruitful for my discussion. This concept relates to the point that within institutions specific language/knowledge practices and identities, constitute desirable behaviour whilst others are regarded as odd or deviant. Following the Foucauldian tradition, I use the concept to understand how learners become 'schooled' and their particular identities are formed amid highly ideological and hegemonic institutional practices regarding what forms of knowledge and particular behaviours are seen as 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Foucault argues that, through *normalisation*, institutions (like prisons and schools) impose a 'law of truth' on individuals:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, impose a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him (Foucault, 1972, p.212).

Unlike Bourdieu, Foucault paints a similar picture of power to Gramsci. Like Gramsci (1971), Foucault (1980) theorises that power is not fixed, and that individuals are capable of resisting their ideological colonisation:

The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle (Foucault, 1980, p.98).

Foucault extends his scope of power beyond nature and structure to examine the myriad ways in which dominant power is constructed, how it functions and the various effects of this power. That is, how dominant powers control, and perhaps even eliminate struggle and resistance, through the process of normalisation which (re)present imposed discourses, ideologies and hegemonic practices as regimes of truth and as natural (Foucault, 1980). It is Foucault's contention that truth or a system of knowledge and power are tightly intertwined:

Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power...Each society has a regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourses which accepts and makes it function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying with what counts as truth (Foucault, 1980, p.131).

Bourdieu conceives of symbolic power, i.e. symbolic systems and the social and political uses of these systems, as 'worldmaking power' that imposes 'legitimate visions of the social world and of its divisions' (Bourdieu 1987, p.13). In a key passage, Bourdieu and Passeron write:

Every power exerts symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are of its force, add to its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations (1977, p.4)

In this respect, we realise that Bourdieu draws from Marxian conflict models. However, unlike Marx and his followers, he does not conceptualise culture as being solely reducible to economic relations. Although Bourdieu's intellectual discourse bears the mark of class and conflict theory, the analysis of culture sets him apart from Marxist interpretations. For Bourdieu, culture as a power resource cannot be reduced simply to economic factors - this point will be advanced in section 4.8 in my discussion of cultural capital and linguistic capital. His analysis of power, however, seems embedded in a conflict approach because he sees cultural forms, in all their permutations, to embody and advance the interests of the (dominant) group that produce them. Using a synthesis of Weber's concept of legitimation and Marxist concepts of ideology<sup>12</sup>, Bourdieu asserts that cultural practices, owing to uneven

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<sup>12</sup>In a Weberian perspective, legitimacy is the heart of domination. Legitimacy implies willingness to comply with a system of rule ('legitimacy orders') or to obey commands ('imperative control'). It is



power relations, assume symbolic value as these practices become disguised, taken-for-granted forms. Hence, as I argue in this thesis, by legitimising certain cultural conventions at the expense of others, institutions such as JP camouflage their own participation and their role in perpetuating inequality. Following Bourdieu, I will advance the point that educational institutions through culturally specific practices (e.g. ‘embodied dispositions’ manifested in *habitus*) systematically delineate differences among learners; and therefore are discriminatory. The irony here is that although these distinctions are developed to support ultimate equality of opportunity, they are inherently discriminatory. Drawing on Bernstein (1990), Sadovnik (1991, p.53) makes the point that despite claims to the contrary, ‘schools reproduce what they are ideologically committed to eradicating – social class advantages in schooling and society’. This is so because of the workings of dominant forms of educational practices regulating the legitimate production, distribution and reproduction of power/knowledge (in Foucault’s sense). As Bernstein (1973a, p.85) noted:

Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realization of knowledge on the part of the taught.

Moreover:

How a society selects, classifies, distributes and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control (Bernstein, 1973a, p.85).

Bourdieu’s theory of social and cultural reproduction has received a notably mixed reception. Giroux (1982, 1983, 2001) in particular has criticized Bourdieu for an overdeterministic account of the processes of social and cultural reproduction actions. According to Giroux (1982), Bourdieu’s theory ‘is a theory of reproduction that displays no faith in subordinate classes and groups, no hope in their willingness to reinvent and reconstruct the conditions under which they live, work and learn’ (cited in Harker *et al.*, 1990, p.102). Even Edward LiPuma (1993), one of Bourdieu’s most

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Weber’s (1947) contention that every ‘system of authority...attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief its legitimacy’ (in Ansell, 2001, p.8706). For Marx society is divided into two conflicting and stratified classes based on ownership of the means of production (land, wealth, commercial industries), and the means to purchase and control the labour of others. Marx argues that ideology is all about control of the dominant class of society over the rest of society to make the ruling class interest appear to be the interest of all. Thus, he says that ideology is ‘distorted thought’ because it ‘mystifies real relations...of class interests’ (see Swingewood, 1975, p.72).

sympathetic readers, makes the point that Bourdieu's explanation of human motivation seems overwhelmingly reductive. Taking Bourdieu's terms of analysis into account, LiPuma asserts that resistance has no place in Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction. Speaking for many, LiPuma writes that:

Given the state of the theory, then, there does not appear to be a way to explain how society can produce individuals who, operating in specific fields...produce forms of thought that expose and threaten the reproduction of the class structure (1993, p.24)

I shall argue against the view that Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, based on his concepts of field, capital and habitus, is nothing but deterministic. My discussion in the following sections of this chapter elaborates on the fact that much as there is reproduction in schools that does not mean there is no form of resistance whatsoever, however small. In chapter 7 for instance, I give examples that show how young 6-8 years olds are able to navigate the dominant monolingual culture of the school to insert their multilingual resources. I concur with John Guillory (1997), in his defence of Bourdieu's work. Guillory challenges misrepresentations which have resulted in a 'bad press' in the U.S.A in particular, saying that it is naïve to think of Bourdieu only in terms of reproduction, taken to mean that in his theory there is never any change at all.

Bourdieu's sociology in no way denies the ubiquity of struggle or fact of social change...Most change in Bourdieu's terms, is the effect of struggles within fields that never cease to be determined by the principles of the field, even when what constitutes power or value in the field is being contested. Bourdieu's theory also allows for change as the result of struggles between fields as they interrupt or interfere with each other, but again, these struggles are not necessarily undertaken with progressive transformative ends in view. Sometimes, of course, they are (Guillory, 1997, p.369).

From this perspective then, I see the field of educational institutions, with all their assimilation practice and ethos, as spaces of variable position taking. I also understand classrooms as assimilation sites as well as spaces of struggle over identity positionings because of the range of ways in which resources are organised and managed in schooling. The kinds of identities that learners can claim at JP largely depend on the amount of symbolic capital one has.

### 3.4 Theoretical Frame and Approach

Flowing from the background above, I use Bourdieu's theory of practice framework to examine, through the lens of discursive practices (including spoken, written and general behaviour), how English is constructed in social interactions at JP. Specifically, what discourses of and about English are produced and reproduced, and how these specific practices of English are shaped in the local ideological terrain. Discourses are central here. Discourses do not only organise and structure behaviour but they also give meaning and value to certain ways of being. I follow Kress's definition of discourses, which is influenced by Foucault, as

systematically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meaning and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what is possible to say and not possible to say...A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is talked about. In that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions. because they give meaning and value (1989, p.7).

By looking at institutional cultural practices in a micro-setting such as JP, my intention is to unearth the role of English, the struggle over resources, and the reproduction of social inequality. I am aware that those institutional ideologies about what language/knowledge is legitimate, as well as discursive practices that frame these orientations as true, are connected to social, economic and political interests. It is not the purpose of my analysis to provide an exhaustive macro-micro analogy. However, as I mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, I will make the links where necessary. My main aim running through this thesis is to explore local institutional/structural conditions, at the same time as accounting for individual orientations to those ideologically-based practices.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's practice approach to social life is critical as it allows us to understand classroom interactions, particularly in the context of SA desegregated schooling, in relation to 'the historical and structural processes...which set the parameters of social boundaries' (Williams, 1992, p.218). If we are to grasp what happens in multilingual settings such as JP it is central that we not only attend to the discursive and social practices that contribute to the construction of knowledge in the classroom, but also to the power relations as these manifest themselves through wider

educational processes. Specifically, I argue that the establishment of authority and legitimacy through language/knowledge practices at JP is a matter of symbolic domination/power (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977); and further reveals struggles over different subject social positions. According to Heller and Martin-Jones 'linguistic practices are central to the struggles over the legitimization of relations of power, which are, in the end, what such control amounts to' (2001, p.2).

By using Bourdieu's notions of cultural and linguistic capital, therefore, this study explicitly emphasises what counts as legitimate knowledge, forms of knowledge and their display in the framework of ideological orientations and linguistic and structural arrangements. I use structural arrangements to mean the general way the institution of school (field) is organised, or the day-to-day life in educational sites. That is, the social and institutional routines, language and literacy norms and practices, how bodies should be presented, and how time, space and social relations are organised. While these structural arrangements are patterned or ordered in terms of what counts as knowledge, what counts as displaying knowledge and what positionings are made available in grade 1 classrooms, learners are not passive recipients of these discursive and social constructions. Rather, across space, time and events, as is evident in chapter 7 we see some learners resist 'deficit' categorisation and positioning in interaction, while simultaneously negotiating their way into more positive constructions of identity in the classroom community. Accordingly, Jill Bourne (2001a) says that

children learn the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate discourses in the school system as they learn their 'basic skills', how to read and write, and count to 10. They learn what to reveal about their lives; which language counts, and which does not; and they learn to find ways of coping with this knowledge, of living with dignity...children are not passive pawns in the socialisation processes. Adopting this latter position would by-pass the children's own active involvement in the process, and their contribution to it through the positions they take up within the practices involved (2001a, p.104).

From this perspective, I wish to advance the following two points in this thesis. First, my point is that classrooms are complex spaces with constraints and possibilities that are not always straightforward. Second, while I argue that classrooms are highly assimilationist, and that not all subject positions are equally open to learners, owing to the kinds of resources valued, the evaluation of these resources and the hierarchical

organisation of resources, they can also be defined as ambiguous places with all sorts of contradictions and constraints. Foucault (1971) defines this 'uneasiness' in this way:

We know very well that we are not free to say anything, that we cannot speak of anything when and where we like, and just anyone, in short cannot speak of just anything (Foucault, 1971; as translated by Sheridan, 1981, p.122).

For instance, in chapter 5 I demonstrate that in JP, despite the liberal ideologies that the school claims to support of difference, inclusiveness and multilingualism, the actual institutional practices and ethos of the school pointed to overwhelmingly monolingual practices, and monolithic ideas about 'standard' English. In chapter 6, it shall become apparent how the classroom organisation, by means of discursive practices, foregrounds English as the natural order, while at the same time 'backgrounding' or 'de-emphasising' other knowledge. By exercising control over 'what can be said', 'how it should be said', 'how the body should be presented' and 'who can say it', and further placing value on English and certain kinds of knowledge resources, I argue that institutions such as JP simultaneously regulate access to these resources and aim to assimilate children into the social order of the school. This is orchestrated through the legitimisation of social order that naturalises practices that are considered good, normal or correct. For instance, chapter 6 illuminates the 'legitimate' position of English at JP, and how through hegemonic discourses it is constructed as natural-order to ensure its acceptance, and perhaps mask the relations of power that are tied to the access and control over this resource. Thus issues of exclusion and inclusion are particularly important, and how the (re)production of educational ideologies which privilege some children, and not others, are accomplished in social interactions.

Bourdieu has worked to resist the various labels assigned to his intellectual project:

I've never thought in those terms. And I tend to object to the questions. Firstly because, when they are usually asked...it is almost always polemical, classifactory intention behind it, in order to catalogue you...'Bourdieu, basically, is 'Durkheimian'. From the point of view of the speaker, this is pejorative; it means: he isn't Marxist and that's bad. Or else 'Bourdieu is a Marxist', and *that* is bad...At any rate, the answer to the question whether the author is a Marxist, Durkheimian or Weberian gives us practically no information about the author (1990b, p.27-28).

As a sociologist with a strong anthropological background, Bourdieu's theoretical contribution, for educational researchers in particular, continues to present insights into the exceptionally intricate relationship between social structures, cultural practices and interlocutors. This reminds us that 'reality' is more dynamic and more complex; it is more than a mere reflection of objective superstructures. According to Heller and Martin-Jones (2002)

there is no simple one-to-one link between social categories, social inequality, and interaction in education. Instead, these relations are mediated and produced in institutions that are fundamentally about producing and distributing different kinds of resources. The ways in which they do so are articulated in a complex fashion with other institutions and social networks and with respect to historical processes (2002, p.4).

All too often, current analyses of schooling take for granted that there is some kind of one-one correspondence between, say, broader socio-political factors and local school practices (see for example Macedo *et al.*, 2003; Pennycook, 2001; Williams, 1992 for an extended discussion). While I agree with the politics of the position that schools mirror broader political issues I would extend this view to say that schools do not just reflect these forces but they also play a central role in the production, reproduction and circulation of power relations (see chapter 2). Hence, I would argue that analyses that assume a direct and immediate correspondence between what happens in schools and macro/global influences are rather mechanistic. This is not to deny that schooling serves particular political, economic, social and cultural purposes. Rather, as is the case in this study, it is to understand how schooling in all its contradictions and permutations, engenders social inequality, and therefore social boundaries, by means of hegemonic language/knowledge activities and events. As explained in chapters 1 and 2, it is my position that exploring school practices through the lens of language, and particularly an understanding of the nature and functions of language, enables us to locate areas of school life that actually reproduce and legitimate language/knowledge. Furthermore, language allows us to see ways in which institutional categorisation processes intersect with the wider history of education in SA, and ways in which legitimate identities are formed and articulated discursively. Thus, Jurgen Habermas, a German post-structural scholar, (1987) urges us

not to limit our critique on relationships of power to those institutions in which power is overtly declared, hence to political and social power only; we must extend it to those areas of social life in which power is hidden behind the *amiable countenance of cultural familiarity*.

Habermas echoes Bourdieu's (1991) notion of 'masking' and Foucault's (1980) concept of 'regime of truth'. What becomes clear here is that school institutions such as JP show this 'amiable countenance of cultural familiarity', largely tucked away within the homogenising or standardisation processes and the ethos of the school regarding what it means to be a member of that community; while at the same playing a role in the continued perpetuation of cultural and linguistic inequalities. My point is that if we are to understand how education operates it is necessary that we identify school processes and mechanisms that manifest domination and subordination in order to lay bare ideological processes. Hence, I have argued earlier that despite conservative notions that schools are neutral sites my own position in this study is that education as a field, together with its related practices, represents struggles over social inequality. It is helpful in my work to see the classroom as the primary site of social and cultural production and reproduction, to focus on its social order, its power relations, positions provided for learners, as well as practices that define opportunities and disadvantage for learners. That is, as a discursive space in which learners struggle over access to those cultural, symbolic and material resources (for example, English proficiency and performance, as well as school credentials/certificates that are tied to positioning within the school) that tend to privilege some and marginalise others on the basis of their relation to the institutional standards.

### **3.5 The Linguistic Market-Place**

Through his writings, Bourdieu has attempted to expose the myth of the meritocracy often associated with education. He does this by means of three key concepts: field, habitus, and capital (implying symbolic economy and market). Following Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), then, it is my contention that the educational field is some kind of symbolic economy, with its own market and its own different types of capital. It could be argued that this notion of symbolic economy in education is perhaps as powerful as the financial one. As I discuss in the sections that follow, Bourdieu distinguishes between three forms of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic capital) to explain the kind of exchange between individuals and groups; and he uses the

metaphor of the 'market' to explore the relationship between social practices and the social context in which these are produced.

For the purposes of this thesis, the notion of market will be used to refer to social interaction as a site of advantage and disadvantage, in which linguistic products, and linguistic behaviour including linguistic habitus, become ascribed with a certain currency. As is the case in any market, in a given classroom interaction some linguistic products are valued and some are not valued. Moreover, learners do not have the same kind of English capital; some learners are in possession of *the* linguistic capital while other learners have quite a different sort of capital. The kind of English linguistic capital a learner has not only determines his/her purchasing power but it is also tantamount to opportunities and the kinds of identities learners can claim in the classroom. To quote Bourdieu, as cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.145), 'Every linguistic exchange contains the potentiality of an act of power, and all the more so when it involves agents who occupy asymmetric positions in the distribution of the relevant capital'. My point here is that the distribution of linguistic capital, and the distribution of other forms of capital such as the organisation of the body during classroom activities and events, define learners' position in the classroom, as well as in the school.

What is pertinent is that the English as the legitimate language here is not only *understood* but also *listened* to and likely to be recognised as *acceptable* in all situations where the speaker is afforded the occasion to speak (Bourdieu, 1991, p.55). Those who do not have this legitimate language commodity may become excluded from participating in classroom activities and therefore condemned to silence. As it shall become apparent in chapter 6, legitimate language does not only involve the correct form of English language, but it also has to do with the identity of the speaker. It is important to realise that discourse practices that legitimise certain ways of speaking and construct certain subjects as being successful vary across different classrooms – as we see in the data chapters to follow. Hence, I will argue that by homogenising multilingual learners into the dominant English culture of JP, the school plays a crucial role in the perpetuation of English linguistic domination and the cultural reproduction of an ethos often associated with ex-model C schooling.



The notion of 'market' in schooling, the distribution of different forms of capital (that is, language and literacy practices) and the different purchasing power that these different capitals have within the school context recalls a number of research studies in the field of education. Although not all this research necessarily uses Bourdieu's model of cultural reproduction as a basis of analysis, the central argument of this body of work has been that children from different speech communities, owing to different socialisation and interaction patterns, develop specific communicative and linguistic practices which include or exclude them in educational institutions. The elaborate array of research includes studies on language socialisation practices in school and out-of-school, drawing on linguistic anthropology, in particular the works of Ochs (1988), and Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) for example. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) and Susan Phillips (1983) arguably stand out as two influential investigators in this line of inquiry. Both these authors provide comparative descriptive analyses of sociocultural practices into which learners are socialised at home and those practices that they encounter at school to show the extent to which different socialisation practices disadvantage children from certain social class backgrounds and advantage those children coming from dominant classes of society. Moreover, there is substantial evidence in sociolinguistic studies on language variation to show that educational institutions often consider linguistic varieties that non-mainstream children bring with them to school to be incomplete or deficient versions of the standard English variety (see for example, Baugh, 1999; Bernstein, 1973a, 1973b; Blommaert *et al.*, 2006; Labov, 1972). Thus, the mismatches between the language of the home and that of the school are seen to be an important contributory factor of educational failure.

For example, Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) classic *Ways with Words* ethnographic study of three communities in the U.S.A – Trackton, a black rural community, and Roadville, a white community; as well as one urban community composed of both black and white families. She was particularly interested in 'the variety of ways in which children from non-mainstream homes learn about reading, writing and using oral language to display their knowledge' (1982, p.50) and how these differ from the so-called middle-class experience. In her analysis she reported that although children in each community were socialised differently, the socialisation processes and practices of the urban middle class tended to resemble the instructional practices found in schools. Thus, middle class urban children were often prepared for school

through a range of activities that included reading books, playing with educational toys, labeling, describing events and answering questions. For rural children, although they were exposed to a range of activities such as storytelling, rhymes, songs and church-related literacy there was a disjuncture between what they had learnt at home and school. As a result they experienced more difficulties succeeding academically than did the urban- middle class counterparts. As in Heath, Susan Phillips (1983) in *The Invisible Culture* provided a comparative investigation of socialization practices of the Warm Spring Indian home and school communities and reported similar findings. Her analysis revealed that the differences in language socialisation practices at home and school resulted in different learning outcomes. She argues that White Spring Indian children did not do as well at school compared to their Anglo children in schools because the home practices of the latter tend to mirror those practices of the school.

The point that I have tried to illustrate above concerns the fact that while learners may possess various forms of capital (e.g. linguistic and literacy resources), the market of schooling may require a different kind of linguistic capital which is imbued with its own value and power. For instance, we know that at JP English linguistic repertoires and language practices have the greatest purchasing power in social interactions. Thus, those who display this English commodity are likely to achieve social/education mobility and success within the school, whereas those learners whose English is considered impoverished, or lacking currency in some way or the other may not be able to fully participate in this market because they may have little or no power at all to manoeuvre. It is thus my contention in the following discussion section that the world created in the classroom is one of struggle over resources (capital) and, dominant and subordinate positions. I will elaborate on this issue of the type of positions and positioning that are available to learners in section 3.7 on habitus.

### 3.6 Field

Social relations operate within social spaces, which Bourdieu distinguished as different fields (e.g. a journalistic, a political, an artistic, an education fields<sup>13</sup>) where culture, in broad terms, is experienced, reproduced and practiced. For instance, school institutions or family and community structures, all of which constitute fields, are just some of many intersecting and/or competing social spaces that individuals may experience in their life trajectories (Luke, 1992). For the purposes of this thesis, I would define a field as a social space ‘in which there is a hierarchy, depending on the amount of capital one has’ (Roberts and Sarangi, 2001, p.174). By this, I mean that a field could be seen as a social arena in which subjects negotiate, and compete over valued resources and access to resources, which determine the kind of positions they can occupy and identities they can claim for themselves at specific moments. The habitus of an individual exists in relation to the field in which that individual’s actions are carried out, and the same understanding applies to the notion of capital because ‘when one speaks of a specific capital, this means to say that this capital is effective *in relation to* a particular field’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p.73). Accordingly, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.96) assert that ‘to think in terms of a field is to *think relationally*’.

By using the concept of field, as Postone *et al.* (1993) correctly point out, Bourdieu aims to provide the frame for ‘relational analysis’, by which he means an account of the multi-dimensional space of positions and position taking of agents. Therefore, the position of a particular agent characterises an interplay between that person’s habitus and their place in a field of positions as defined by the distribution of the appropriate form of capital. And the nature and range of possible positions would vary socially and historically (1993, p.5). Following Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b), my contention is that the institution of education as a field has the monopoly in reproducing the linguistic market via its (subjective) knowledge transmission, social constitution of distinction and stratification. Although Bourdieu’s concept of capital is grounded in economic theory, his main concern is with the struggle for cultural, social and symbolic capital in education for example. Each field could be described as a semi-

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<sup>13</sup> Throughout his work, Bourdieu has focused on different fields: e.g. the academic field, see *Homo Academicus* (1988), for the intellectual field and social elites, see *The State Nobility* (1996), and for education see *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, 1990), *Language and Symbolic Power* (Pierre Bourdieu, 1991). Note that these include discipline-based fields such as anthropology or linguistics etc.

autonomous, structured social space characterised by discourse, social activity and practice that defines its own identity and status as an entity (see Bourdieu, 1991, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). By this I mean that a field, say racially desegregated education in SA, has special structural behaviour or properties that are peculiar to that field. Therefore, all fields form part of the multi-dimensional social space and are located within a larger power field that regulates or manages behaviour, possibilities and limitations within each specific field (Luke, 1992). As defined in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.97), a field is:

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relations to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc).

For Bourdieu, field is relational: ‘a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions’. Furthermore, he asserts that ‘what exists in the social world are relations – not interaction between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals’ (1992, p.97). The concept of field reveals his methodological intentions to explain social life or social space empirically without resort either to deterministic Lèvi-Strauss structuralism or to the structural functionalism of the descendants of Durkheim. In other words, Bourdieu aimed to bring back real-life subjects or actors who had simply vanished in structural analysis. However, in his critique of subjectivism, Bourdieu (1984) argues against any attempt to ‘reduce social space to the conjunctural space of interactions’ and emphasises the importance of constructing an objective social space, ‘a structure of objective relations which determines the possible form of interactions’ (1984, p.244). This implies that analysis should avoid ‘treating social facts as things’ in order to understand that social positions are also ‘strategic emplacements, fortresses to be defended and captured in a field of struggles’ (ibid.).

First, it is worth noting that this sense of relational thinking, i.e. position and position taking, shows that positions in a field are defined as oppositions (e.g. teacher ≠ learner, competent learner ≠ mediocre learner, examiner ≠ supervisor ≠ student). Put differently, if positions are related to one another by opposition then the take up of

positions means that the agents in the field are related by struggle and competition. Suffice it to say that this duality of position and position taking suggests a very dynamic form of organisation – that a field is durable but not a fixed structure. From this viewpoint then any field ‘presents itself as a structure of probabilities – of rewards, gains, profits, or sanctions – but always implies a measure of indeterminacy...Even in the universe par excellence of rules and regulations, playing with the rule is part and parcel of the rule of the game’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.18). This means that any field is a space of ‘strategic possibilities’ in which actors, vis-à-vis the relative accumulations of capital, have potential moves and courses of action, an idea Bourdieu (1993, p.314) credits to Foucault. According to Hanks (2005, p. 74) ‘the idea is not that any field has a discrete, accepted border around it, but that access is always differentiated and selective’. For instance, as in the context of desegregated schools in SA, the limits of access may be illustrated by a variety of factors including language, social class, geography, and economic or symbolic resources.

Second, this leads to another key element - the kinds of values that circulate in specific fields and therefore become the basis of conflict and competition among agents. Because of this circulation of value (recognition, prestige, capital) agents tend to be located at different ends of the pole of the field. That is, either they are dominated or dominating; included or excluded in the field in which they operate. This begs the question this study will address in relation to SA schooling – who is at the centre and who is at the periphery? Therefore, social practices are immersed in a system of distinction, which exemplify the legitimation of, and regulate specific forms of capital in terms of what is valuable in a particular field. Hence, fields can be defined as ‘arenas of struggle for legitimation’ or structured spaces of ‘dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital’ (Swartz, 1997, p.123). In this light, I have found Bourdieu’s use of a game metaphor as a way of understanding his concept of field useful. The analogy of a game reveals his intention to demonstrate the extent to which fields, like games, function by means of rules and regularities, with players in conformity with the rules of the game, and in possession of or having access to different kinds of and quantities of ‘tokens’ (capital) with which to play the game:

At each moment, it is the state of the relations of force between players that defines structure of the field. We can picture each player as having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colors, each color corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her *relative force in the game*, her *position* in the space of play, and also her *strategic orientation toward the game*, what we call in French her 'game', the moves that she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.99, emphasis in original).

This implies that agents' stakes (moves and exchanges) within a field, and across fields, are determined by the nature of capital one can access. This said, fields are not fully autonomous because capital yielded/amassed in one field may be utilised/converted in another. This is so because each field is a semi-autonomous social space constructed and maintained in a state of continuous reconstruction, because of its own accumulation of specific historical properties, its own forms of capital and the agentive actions of individuals that function within it. Although fields have some borders or 'barriers to entry' in Bourdieu's terms, these are not always fixed, but often fluid and shifting, and objects of struggles and contentions themselves, because of the struggles to define field-specific capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.100). Bourdieu's notion of struggle is central to our understanding of contests over where or what limits should be set, what constitutes and may count as legitimate constructions of knowledge and practices in social fields of activity.

### 3.7 Habitus

Another key concept in Bourdieu's works is that of **habitus** - a mediating concept used to help us revoke the common-sense duality between the individual and the social by capturing 'the internalization of the externality and the externalization of the internality' Loïc Wacquant (2005, p.316). This suggests somewhat a collapse of boundaries between social structures and practice. That is, habitus is an operational site with a dual sense of structure – a generative system of dispositions that are both objective and subjective. The notion of habitus refers to the way society becomes embodied in individuals in the form of long-lasting dispositions. Put differently, habitus concerns specific dispositions (for example modes of perception, habits, attitudes, values, likes, dislikes etc.), trained capacities or ways of being towards practice, which then guide individuals to behave or respond in determinate ways within the social context in which it was created and nurtured. It is important to

realise that while internalised sets of dispositions guide perception and action within structural arrangements, or fields, an individual may be unaware of its constitution in terms of specific structure/rule in the sense that the acquired dispositions seem natural. Thompson, in his introduction to Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), describes habitus as

a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. These dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any 'rule' (p.12, emphasis in original).

Whilst Bidet (1979) defines it as

The culture (of an epoch, class, or any group) as it is internalised by the individual in the form of durable dispositions that are at the basis of his/her behaviour (in Harker, 1984, p.120).

Harker (1984, p.117) describes it more simply as follows

Habitus is the way a culture is embodied in the individual.

The main points here are that habitus takes on a particular structure which comes to resemble the objective social conditions in which it was constituted, it is durable, transferable and functions on an 'unconscious' plane. The creation of specific features of the habitus is produced through the gradual process of inculcation, which begins early on. Since it's a disposition acquired through a process of socialisation, it tends to 'endure through the life history of the individual' (1991, p.13). Thus, it has a direct bearing on agents' cultural ways of behaving, seeing, acting, taking positions, occupying space and participating in historical time. So conceived, the habitus serves to describe the regularities that are inherent in all cultural practices, as well as the practices it helps to structure. This regularity or 'structure'<sup>14</sup> is described by reference to the social embedding of the actor, the fact that actors are socially formed with relatively stable orientations and distinctive, class and culture-based and engendered ways of doing things. The stability of the habitus however, is not articulated in rules, as Thompson points out in the quotation above, but in habits, dispositions to behave in particular ways and modes of perception defined in line with the objective conditions. Accordingly, Bourdieu says that

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<sup>14</sup> The dispositions produced, and therefore habitus, are structured in the sense that they unavoidably reflect the social conditions in which they were acquired (see Bourdieu, 1991, p.12)

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside agents. And when the habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127).

This is the point at which the habitus and field articulate. The fish-in-water metaphor emphasises the embedded-ness of individuals in the social world. To speak of habitus is to 'assert the individual...is social, collective' thus it is 'a socialized subjectivity' (ibid., p.126). While residing within the individual the habitus is not a biological or psychological personality trait but a set of learned, shared and historical generative modes of perception, appreciation and action. Although a product of (early) personal and social history, Bourdieu emphasises that habitus is neither mechanical nor inevitable. Habitus is transposable; developed in one structural situation (or field), in a particular social position, it can adapt to new situations and positions due to the 'gap...between expectations and experience' (2000, p.149). Bourdieu later stresses that 'only a thorough-going process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can...durably transform habitus' (p.172). The main point is that habitus also provides capacity for improvisation.

The concept of habitus is very important to an understanding of Bourdieu. However it remains the most contested of his concepts with an avalanche of critical remarks ranging from philosophical arguments to considerations pertaining to methodological problems. Bourdieu's critics and interpreters argue that it is overly deterministic as it allows no space for social change and portrays social life and cultural meanings as somewhat static. For Giroux (1982), Nash (1990) and Gorder (1980), amongst others, habitus reinforces and is locked into determinism. Hence, it does not necessarily provide for modification of objective probabilities. For Richard Jenkins this notion is a closed loop because 'structures produce the habitus, which generate practice, which reproduces the structures, and so on' (2000, p.152). He concludes that 'it is difficult to know where to place conscious deliberation and awareness in Bourdieu's scheme of things' (1992, p.77). Thus 'such a model constitutes no more than another form of determination in the last instance' (2000, p.151). Giroux is even more emphatic

as important as the notion of habitus is in linking the concept of domination to the structure of personality needs, its definition and use reduce it to a conceptual straight-jacket that provides no room for modification or escape. Thus the notion of habitus



smothers the possibility for social change and collapses into a mode of management ideology' (1982, p.7).

I wish to argue that Giroux's interpretation is fundamentally misleading as it presupposes that Bourdieu is arguing that individuals and groups are locked into unchanging structures, which continually reproduce themselves. In addition, it implies that individuals are helpless, and as such have no effect on these structures or practices. Similarly, Anthony King in his article *Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu* (2000) criticizes the notion of habitus. King argues that although Bourdieu believes that this concept resolves the subject-object dualism of social theory, it slips back into exactly the kind of objectivism he refutes. As such it reverts to the dualistic social ontology of the isolated individual on the one hand, and the objective structure on the other hand. King further claims that 'if the habitus were determined by objective conditions, ensuring appropriate action for the social position in which any individual was situated, and the habitus were unconsciously internalized dispositions and categories, then social change would be impossible' (2000, p.427). As in Giroux, King's critique of an over-deterministic account of the processes of social and cultural reproduction, does not do justice to Bourdieu's work. Such a misinterpretation leads us to think that individuals are merely enacting an already established system of rules, and as a result have no control over the objective social and cultural realities they engage in. This rather rigid and limited view seems to underestimate the significance of human agency, as well as the cultural practices it helps to structure. Moreover, habitus cannot be reduced solely to agents or structures/practice but rather exemplifies complex, yet flexible, dialectical moments between the objective and subjective. While residing within the individual, the idea of habitus exemplifies the way society inhabits the individual, and at the same time how the individual inhabits society. As a product of history and an internalisation of external social formations, the habitus is subjected to experiences that continually affect it. The effect of these experiences could either reinforce or transform its structures.

Bourdieu himself seems rather exasperated with those who accuse him of determinism, drawing specific attention to 'the *generative capacities* of dispositions' (1990b, p.13, emphasis in original). Responding to Giroux, and many other critics, Bourdieu (1992) writes that habitus can be used as a 'strategy-generating principle enabling agents to

cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations' (p.132). Accordingly, Harker (1984) and Lemert (1995) contend that habitus is a mediating, not a deterministic, construct that introduces space for change, creativity and unpredictability in social practice. Similar arguments are advanced by scholars such as Craig Calhoun (1993), James Ostrow (2000), and Richard Harker (2000) pointing out that 'habitus changes with each iteration...' and that it is '...no more 'fixed' than the practices which it helps to structure' (p. 168). It is in Lemert's terms, regular but not regulating and structured but not determining (1995, p.142). This is so because Sulkunin (1982), drawing on Bourdieu, writes:

The habitus is constantly being formed in the daily practices of individual subjects...and while it is a structured system of meanings it does not follow any mechanistic formal or 'algebraic' logic. People do not simply reproduce their meaning systems, they also produce and use them. One must see classes and their members not just as actors in a prefabricated play but also as creative subjects (cited in Harker, 1984, p.120).

In this sense, I argue that the theory of habitus recognises the active involvement of agents in making and remaking the social world by engaging embodied behaviour (dispositions), and further shows that this behaviour is itself a product of the social world. With habitus, Bourdieu not only stresses that socialisation is a process of embodiment, but also links social behaviour/character to structures of inequality that exist within society, social relations or fields. In chapter 6 and 7 for instance, my data will demonstrate that in the face of English domination and the monolingual habitus that the school socialises children into, some children are able to subvert the monolingual ethos to produce multilingual practices. In this way then, the world of school is a space of struggle over positions and position taking, in which learners may take up or resist some of the positionings.

### **3.8 Bodily Hexis and Identity**

Embodied dispositions towards practice produce what Bourdieu calls a bodily hexis, which refers to 'a certain durable organization of one's body and of its deployment in the world' (Bourdieu, 1991, p.13). That is to say, the way the body is organised in practice. This relation between habitus and bodily hexis is critical in foregrounding the human person (body) as a site of ingrained history which (re)produces specific attitudes, perceptions and representations of practice. This notion of bodily hexis is helpful for understanding the kinds of linguistic demeanour/behaviour expressed and

represented by learners in this thesis. I argue in the following chapters that learners internalise the dominant social values, which become evident through their linguistic performance/behaviour. This image reflects the individual body in terms of ‘history incorporated and incorporation actualized’ (ibid.) and here is also an overlap with Foucault’s (1988) exploration of biopolitics and biopower – institutional (or other social site) technologies, knowledges discourse and practices which determine and regulate the production of certain kinds of behaviours, including linguistic behaviours. Like Bourdieu, the body also figures prominently in Michel Foucault’s depiction of social and discursive ‘technologies’ that guide individual conduct. It is possible to argue that the acquisition of certain ‘school identities’, for example specific linguistic knowledge and demeanour, involves organising the body (through practice) in a manner that will produce particular forms of cultural and symbolic resources. Crucial for this thesis is the idea that identity is a performative act as I discuss next.

In theorising language and identity, I draw on the post-structuralist work of Michel Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980) and Judith Butler (1990, 1997) to explore the kind of positionings that are available to multilingual children in a former-white school. That is, I explore the discursive construction of identity, or subject, in social interactions, as well as how these specific identities are performed. Also working within the post-structuralist framework, Blommaert’s (2005) conceptualisation of identity as ‘particular forms of semiotic potential, organised in a repertoire’ (p.207) or as ‘a form of socially meaningful practice’ (p.208) is central to my notion of the ‘bodies’ of knowledge/language I referred to in chapter 1 to mean types of, presentations of and displays of linguistic resources. Blommaert, like feminist scholar Butler, emphasises the performative nature of identity, and argues that identities are constructed through semiotic means, including linguistic resources. This idea of identity echoes Bourdieu’s (1991) complementary concepts of habitus as a ‘set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways’ (p.12); and bodily-hexis as ‘a certain durable organization of one’s body and of its deployment in the world’ (p.13). By engaging with post-structural critical theory I reject essentialised notions that see identity (the self or the individual) as ‘one of a unitary, essentially non-contradictory and above all rational entity’ (Henriques et al., 1984, p.93) and move towards conceptions that define identity as the product or an ‘effect’ of dominant social discourses, and semiotic discourses, that are tied to the dominant practices, culture

and ethos of the school. Foucault's (1972, 1977) notion of *discursive practice* is important in this thesis; in particular the constitutive force of discourse in which learner identities/subjects are formed, positioned, stratified, normalised and resisted, across space and time, in relation to the dominant institutional culture of the school.

### 3.9 Capital

While **capital** is the most familiar of Bourdieu's concepts to educational research, it is however part of a general model of social action. Like field and habitus, the concept of capital also serves to theoretically mediate the individual and society. For Bourdieu, society is organised by the differential distribution of capital, on one level. On another level, by participating in cultural practices, individuals attempt to maximise their capital. This is so because the structure and distribution of capital at a given moment in time also represents the inherent structure of the social world. That is, 'the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). Therefore, the capital agents are able to accumulate could be conceived as tantamount to their life chances. That is to say, the quantity, and quality, of capital defines agents' social trajectory within their respective fields [the economic field, education field etc.]; moreover, it serves to reproduce class differences, and social distinctions. Bourdieu's use of capital, which is neither Marxian nor classic economic, entails the capacity to exercise control over one's own future (presupposing agency), as well as that of others (Postone et al., 1992). Thus, it is a form of power. In contrast to a purely Marxist economic construction of capital, Bourdieu defines it more broadly to include the interplay among what he distinguishes as social, cultural and economic capital. Rather than limiting capital to monetary and property assets, as is familiar to students of Marxist theories, Bourdieu breaks most clearly from formal Marxist constructions — i.e. as strictly a characterizing trait of capitalism. As mentioned earlier, for Bourdieu culture is central to social relations. Hence we find specific rules and logics of functioning within different fields or institutions. While field and habitus refer, respectively, to the site of struggle for power (between dominant and subordinate classes), and to rules organising principles of actions within which these struggles take place, the notion of capital describes the cultural resources used by individuals and institutions to legitimise their power and to dominate those

without the same resources. In this way, individuals and institutions reproduce themselves over time.

Although based on an economic metaphor, Bourdieu applies the concept of capital to emphasise the value of non-economic or non-material possessions, including social status, family background and education. One sees why he vehemently rejects the charge of 'pure' economic theory, which suggests that the point of all social action is simply to convert symbolic capital into material capital. This rejection of rational theory<sup>15</sup> highlights Bourdieu's theoretical eagerness in exploring the pertinent conditions of convertibility and non-convertibility, constraints on convertibility or even resistance to convertibility. With this in mind, it is not surprising that Bourdieu expressed contempt for Becker's famed 'human capital' theory which 'reduc[es] the universe of exchanges to mercantile exchange' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). It is important to realise that Bourdieu's reservation is not so much linked to the social depredations attributed to capitalism's reduction of social relations to market exchanges as to the manner in which economic theory takes that reduction as the mirror image of social life generally (Guillory, 1997). From Bourdieu's point of view, as articulated in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 'the theory of strictly economic practice is simply a particular case of a general theory of the economics of practice' (1977b, p.9). It has not been sufficiently appreciated by his critics that his economic discourse exemplifies power and ideological practices rather than capitalist ideas. Among others, Calhoun for example, draws a parallel between the charge of economic theory ideas and Bourdieu's concept of capital. He claims that Bourdieu is unwittingly guilty of economism (i.e. economic motivated theory):

the force of social life [in Bourdieu] is pursuit of distinction, profit, power, wealth, and so on. Bourdieu's account of capital is an account of the resources that people use in such pursuit. In this sense, despite his disclaimers, Bourdieu does indeed share a good deal with...other rational choice theorists (1993, pp.70-71).

The irony is that Calhoun brings back capital into the historical order of capitalism which Bourdieu vehemently rebuts i.e. economic theory. In his defence, Bourdieu writes in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* that

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<sup>15</sup> Rational Action theory refers to 'those social science models which depend upon a model of human behaviour as intrinsically rational and calculative' (Jenkins, 2006, p.72).

my theory owes nothing, despite appearances, to transfer of the economic approach. And I hope one day to be able to demonstrate fully that, far from being the founding model, economic theory (and rational action theory which is its sociological derivative) is best seen as a particular instance, historically dated and situated, of the theory of fields' (1992, p.120).

In his essay *The Forms of Capital* Bourdieu advances the notion of capital beyond its economic conception that narrowly focuses only on material exchanges and goods of quantifiable financial value. By this he means capital which is 'immediately and directly convertible into money', with capacity to yield maximum profits, and which can also be institutionalised in the form of property rights (1986, p. 243). For Bourdieu, this limited focus reduces diversity of exchanges to just mercantile exchange aimed at self-interested maximisation of profit, whereas all other varied forms of exchanges are deemed non-economic, non-material and as such disinterested. Because '*capital presents itself under three fundamental species* (each with its own subtypes), namely, economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital...To these we must add symbolic capital...' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.119). Bourdieu illustrated how different types of capital could be acquired, exchanged and converted into other forms - hence 'transubstantiation' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). The key question then is not how different or relatively independent these species of capital are, but how these different appearances of capital transform themselves into each other in order to maximize accumulation (Schuller *et.al*, 2000). The question of transubstantiation or conversion of resources is important in this thesis. For the purposes of this study, I will only focus on cultural capital. I aim to identify the different forms of resources (i.e. resources that are considered as capital and those that lack currency) within school practices, how learners use these resources and the kinds of identities children can claim based on the resources they possess. In other words, what resources get learners, which access, opportunities and identity positions.

### 3.9.1 Cultural Capital

As an index of relative social power, **cultural capital** remains Bourdieu's distinctive contribution to critical theory, and to contemporary understandings of education studies. Although he refers to different forms of capital in most of his work, cultural capital remains the most developed, used 'to explain how cultural 'judgement' of the dominant group is presented as universal and selectively endowed, allowing it to

legitimize its domination' (Schuller *et.al.*, 2000, p. 3). Since the 1970's, the concept has enabled researchers to view culture as a resource – one that provides access to scarce rewards, is subject to monopolization, and, may be passed on from one generation to the next, under certain circumstances (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, p.567). As a result, researchers in different fields continue to emphasise culture and cultural processes in the analyses of various aspects of social reproduction and stratification. According to Gal (1989) for instance it offers an important analytic tool for researchers locating linguistic and literacy practices in structures of inequality. Descriptions of linguistic resources as 'cultural capital' have become an important part of international debates in education, in particular its effects on educational outcomes and implications for multilingual learners (Blackledge, 2001; Collins, 1993; Heller, 1995, 2001; Heller and Martin-Jones, 2001).

The notion of cultural capital was initially developed and used to explain social class differences in the French education system: in particular, the systems by which learners from middle class backgrounds brought certain valued resources and attributes to school that could be exchanged for other forms of capital (e.g. social connections or school certificates), while other learners' capital was not valued in the same way, or exchangeable (Pennycook, 2000). Bourdieu describes that it was developed

as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between classes and class fractions' (1986, p.243).

Although non-economic in the strict sense, it largely derives its value from its scarcity, and from its inherent capacity to convert into other forms of symbolic capital. Like other forms of capital, cultural capital tends to be concentrated, considerably so, in the minority as opposed to the majority of society. Hence, it favours its own reproduction with that relative minority benefiting from further accumulation.

As outlined earlier, the concept of capital in the context of educational research has been applied and developed in varied ways. In Bourdieu's own work, cultural capital refers to 'knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by

educational or technical qualifications’ (1991, p. 14). Lamont and Lareau (1988) in their study on the status of capitals in US schools define it generally to mean ‘institutionalised, i.e. widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion’ (p.156). James Collins describes cultural capital simply as ‘accumulable social-symbolic resources’ (1993, p.116). In brief, cultural capital symbolizes a form of historically accumulated social advantage, as represented or embodied in objectified social facts such as prestige accents, linguistic and literacy skills, educational ability and qualifications, knowledge of high art and culture, and, most simply if inexactly, ‘merit’ and ‘cultivation’ (Atkinson, 2003, p.147).

The application of capital is useful for understanding the nature of educational resources grade one learners bring to their first year of school, as well as the kinds of identity positions made available in multilingual classrooms. Furthermore, it illuminates which possession of certain cultural knowledge and linguistic resources can ‘open doors’ and limit access to school practices for learners. It is important to realize that ‘...capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power...’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.98). Moreover, ‘players can play to increase or to conserve their capital...they can, for instance, work to change the relative value of [their capital]...and...valorize the species of capital they preferentially possess...’ (ibid., p.99). An observant reader may have realised the reference to the game metaphor I used earlier in my discussion of the **field**. The metaphor draws attention to the fact that positions and position taking are determined largely by one’s ability to play the game of social interaction, as well as what kinds of capital one can contribute. Hence, through their play, ‘players’ can then ‘increase’ or ‘conserve’ their capital. This further highlights the question of agency that is important for this thesis – How do learners negotiate their acts in different moments of classroom life and in their representation of themselves?

### **3.10 Discussion and Conclusion**

Throughout my discussion of my theoretical framework I have shown that the concepts of field, habitus (incorporating the bodily hexis), and capital are intricately linked to one another. What is particularly evident is that the habitus is an acquired



‘sense of the game’ (ibid., p.121) or understanding of how, what and when action, i.e. practice, defined along social lines or given field could be undertaken. It is this comprehension of how things should be done that enables agents to access different forms of capital; determines what positions one occupies in what fields. One might note that these various forms of capital and social positions are all representative of power, as I already mentioned. Taking a particular position in the school classroom is representative of the amount or kind of power the learner possesses. As in every field, educational institutions tend to place value on those specific types of capital that are considered beneficial/constructive. Thus to obtain or maintain particular positions, participants have to demonstrate an acquired ‘game sense’. This implies that a certain know-how expressed through knowledge and action is required on the part of the participant, i.e. habitus. It is this know-how that makes it possible, through an action, for the participant to take a position within particular conditions of a field. In other words, expectations within a specific field dictate the possibilities and limitations of positions and positions that can be taken; just as the possession of a specific form of capital determines what positions may be taken in that field. Consequently, capital and habitus have a role in the production of practices by individuals. Because of the interrelated relationship between these concepts, both inform the participants’ dispositions that enable them to take up various positions in the field.

Therefore, in contrast to commonsense views and/or presuppositions that draw a parallel between academic success or failure and natural aptitudes, Bourdieu defined school performance in terms of the kinds of capital in different social class groups. Thus he argues that cultural capital is unevenly distributed in society, with children from upper class families possessing large amounts while those from working-class and poor families possess relatively little. This means that children from higher status environments remain advantaged simply because they possess the right kind of cultural capital (knowledge and skills) valued by teachers. This shows that education is fraught with bias; academic success is equal to cultural capital and vice-versa, rather than inherent ability. Despite years of worldwide debate and research, education in multilingual environments continues to be a contentious issue laden with problems. Far from accommodating and providing opportunities for multilingual practices in the English language classroom, a growing body of research points out that the manner in which multilingualism is applied, its curriculum, resources, content

and even teacher training, often reinforces the hierarchies of languages and speakers pervasive in society at large (see for example, Ernest-Slavit, 1997, Kapp, 2000, Stroud, 2001).

Of importance, for this thesis, is broadly the kinds of resources that circulate in multilingual educational institutions; how (English) language is inflected in different ways, institutional concepts of legitimate (and marginal) social practices that are being articulated and the type of positionings made available. The idea that school classrooms can be treated as spaces of positions and position takings is central to understanding the kinds of subjectivity and identity produced in these particular fields of social production. School classrooms, as situated fields of production, are made up of specific forms of practice, standards of practice, principles of evaluations, and appropriate ways of being and so on, for those who enter them. Bourdieu's description of field in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993, p.162), as consisting of a 'separate social universe having its own laws of functioning' is helpful for understanding classroom realities constructed through social interaction. This study characterises school classrooms as forms of social organisation somewhat bounded, not by walls or natural barriers but by constraints on who can engage in which positions and by what means (Hanks, 2005). These laws or rules of operating often involve social power relations, and exemplify ideological underpinnings, since subject positions are largely determined by the relative accumulation of cultural capital. As shall become evident later in this thesis, the concept of cultural capital is central to the description and analysis of those forms of knowledge and practice which are valued within the school system, and, in addition, to the task of providing an explanation of the societal function of institutional forms of endorsement emblematic of recognition, success and prestige such as school certificates, stamps for good practice (symbolic resources). Consequently, those who possess or are able to acquire cultural capital become privileged; they possess the necessary kind of means for advancement within the immediate field, as well as beyond. The fact that some practices and forms of knowledge are 'prized' suggests hegemonic power over other forms of representation therefore constituting these alternatives as substandard or mediocre. From this viewpoint, this study sees classrooms as spaces of 'strategic possibilities' (Following Bourdieu, 1993, p.314) in which the take up of certain identity positionings yields

returns. The question to ask then is which identities are legitimated and sanctioned within institutional practices and discourses.

Bourdieu's sociology is important in the context of SA as it emphasizes and provides insight into how schooling reproduces social inequalities and social class positions despite ideologies of language rights, racial integration, equal opportunity and access, and meritocracy in post-apartheid SA policies in general, including education. His approach to overcome the impasse of objectivism and subjectivism remains critical because it shows how wider social reality is inextricably linked to subjective, individual thoughts and institutional practices. In Chapter 2 we have seen how wider educational ideological politics and history contributed to unequal divisions, ranging from economic wealth to cultural (knowledge/language) capital.

In the next chapter, I will discuss my research methodology and the research philosophy that underpinned the research project. I will also introduce the school setting in which research for this thesis was carried out. The chapter will also build on issues of ideology, hegemony and English that I have already discussed in this chapter in order to situate the micro-setting environment.

## Chapter 4

### Research Methods

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that the education field is one of the important sites where language ideologies, the hegemony of English and unequal power relations are produced and reproduced. I have concluded that hegemonic ideological forces (that is, a combination of historical, social and political forces) have contributed to the construction of the overwhelmingly dominant status or position of English in post-apartheid education. Like a number of critical scholars (see for example, Apple, 1999, 2004; Blommaert, 1999; Corson, 1995; Freire, 1985; Gillborn, 1990, 1995; Pennycook, 1989, 1995; Tollefson, 1995, 2004) I argue against the widespread conservative perception that schools are, or at least should be seen as, neutral and objective temples. Clearly, this kind of understanding ‘overlooks important political issues regarding how canons are historically produced, whose interest they serve as well as whose they do not serve, and how they are sustained within specific forms of institutional power’ (Giroux, 1996, p.64). Following this line of argument, I view schools as cultural sites where ‘legitimate’ bodies of knowledge and language are reproduced by means of highly hegemonic educational practices and discourses that privilege English as the ‘natural’ order. For example, as it shall become apparent in sections 4.5 and 4.6 of this chapter, the dominant discourses, cultural practices and ethos of the school in question lean towards monolingualism despite the multicultural nature of the school setting. I will elaborate on these hegemonic discourses and ideological practices at the school in question in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

This chapter aims to bridge the previous chapters on the background and context of the research and the chapters on the findings of the empirical study. The research study was framed with a social justice agenda, particularly with reference to monolingual (English) ideologies that prevail in multicultural and multilingual educational settings, and examines how such ideologies become gate-keeping mechanisms to exclude and discriminate those who do not synchronise with monoglot cultural ways and practices. Despite post-apartheid education policies and liberal

official discourses that explicitly embrace and support diversity and integration, English continues to dominate the social order. Hence, I argue that educational establishments such as ex-Model C schools create conditions for the constitution of a unified linguistic market (that is, an English market) against which everything else is measured. The prevalence of English is supported by ideological discourses that render it a necessary prerequisite in order to participate ‘fully’ in education and mainstream society. It would seem that to do education is to do English and vice-versa.

I begin this chapter by introducing the research philosophy that guided my research as well as my choice of epistemology and methodology. In the second part (section 4.5) of this chapter, I will focus on the research site in order to situate the research questions. I will outline the research context describing the language and cultural practices at the school, the grade one classrooms, and introduce the research participants. The study takes the form of a small-scale ethnographic case study that focuses on social interactions in two multilingual grade one classrooms in a formerly white only school. The aim is to investigate how ‘black children in a white school’ are socialised into the dominant practices and general ethos; what language and cultural resources are considered to have currency; what specific resources enable learners to claim which ‘school identities’ in their school careers? Through addressing these questions, I intend to illuminate ‘forms of knowledge which are privileged as expert knowledge in institutions, and taken to be inherently better for the accomplishment of institutional goals...’ (Heller, 1995, p.375). Furthermore, I will consider how access to these resources (say, standard English or English habitus) shape learners’ identities and position them socially, materially and linguistically in this particular learning situation. My interest in examining the relationship between English language practices, identity construction and ideological forces has been informed by sociocultural and critical social theories of language and school reproduction advanced by Pierre Bourdieu, Basil Bernstein, Michel Foucault and articulated by more contemporary researchers such as Jan Blommaert, James Paul Gee and Sinfree Makoni (see chapters 2 and 3 for a fuller discussion).

## 4.2 Research Philosophy and Methodological Considerations

Within this qualitative study, I adopt the primary method of ethnography, with a critical streak. Although I draw on features of ethnography, this study is not intended as ethnography as traditionally conceived. The term ‘ethnography’ remains one of the most contentious subjects of debate, with some anthropologists criticizing what they see as the tarnished use of the term by other social scientists (for these anthropological criticisms, see for example, Nader, 1993; Spradley, 1980; Wolcott, 1982, 1999). Referring to the use of ethnography in educational research, George Spindler, an anthropologist, contends that

not only has ethnography become a major contribution of anthropology to education, but virtually anything resembling qualitative research seems to be called ethnography. This understandably upsets anthropologists, who think of themselves as having invented ethnography. It is what anthropologists have always done when they do fieldwork. It is part and parcel of *being* an anthropologist, rather than merely a method’ (Spindler and Hammond, 2000, p. 40, emphasis in original).

A similar point, (albeit amusing), is made in Spindler and Spindler’s (1982) book *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling*:

Anything anyone wants to do that has no clear problem, no methodology, and no theory is likely to be called ‘ethnography’ around here (1982, p.1).

Hammersley (2006) offers some reflections on the diversity that currently characterises ethnographic research. Like Spindler, he points out that much of what is seen as ethnography in the social sciences today, including in educational research, bears little resemblance to the criteria built into the classic anthropological definition. For example, anthropologists have generally insisted that the ethnographer’s goal, as Malinowski (1922) puts it, should be to ‘grasp the native’s point of view’ (in Tedlock, 2003, p.167) and there is an expectation that ‘observation of culture in situ’ (Denscombe, 1995, p.184) would lead ethnographers to understand participants’ cultural behaviours, orientations, and motivations better than they can by using any other methodological approach.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) summarize this tension between ‘pure’ ethnography and the ‘misuse’ of the term, or contemporary ethnographic research, in this way ‘the definition of the term ethnography has been subject to controversy. For some, it refers to a philosophical paradigm to which one makes a total commitment, for others it

designates a method one uses as and when appropriate. And, of course, there are positions between these extremes' (p.248). Inevitably, this lead us to the question of what distinguishes ethnographic research, in particular, what are the minimum requirements for ethnography? I am aware that ethnography has been defined variously to mean a 'discipline that seeks to describe and understand cultural experiences of others' (Spindler and Hammond, 2000, p. 40). Peacock (1986) describes ethnography as 'a social scientific description of a people and the cultural basis of their peoplehood' (in Vidich and Lyman, 2003, p.60), while Heath (1982) says that it is used to "describe the 'ways of living' of a social group" (in Goldstein, 1997, p.70). I will elaborate on these descriptions of ethnography later in this chapter; however, it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive definition but rather to identify the characteristics of ethnography and show how these relate to my thesis.

For most 'purist' anthropologists, ethnography involves at least the following four characteristics, according to George Spindler (Spindler and Hammond, 2000). The first of these characteristics is participant observation, where the researcher is immersed in the context of the people being studied, more or less round the clock, while participating in their daily activities to one degree or another, and observing and interviewing them. Spindler and Spindler (1992, p.63) are unequivocal – 'the requirement for direct, prolonged, on-the-spot observation cannot be avoided or reduced. It is the guts of the ethnographic approach'. The second feature that Spindler outlines involves the length of time (of observation) at the research sites because the

validity in anthropological fieldwork is largely dependent on time spent in study. A year is considered a short period for a whole community study, or the study of a band or a group, and most anthropologists spend more time than that...I find this to be a most distinguishing feature of anthropological ethnography. So-called ethnographic studies are done all too frequently in school sites in what most anthropologists would regard inadequate time periods (2000, p.42).

The third feature relates to the quantity of materials and the diverse forms of data collected over a long period of fieldwork in the field. The different kinds of data may include drawings of maps of the locale, artefacts, photographs, field-notes, audio and video-recorded materials, and so on. Although not all these materials will be used in the analysis, it is Spindler's contention that this volume of data is necessary to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the nature of the context we are investigating.

Accordingly, Woods says that in order to ‘develop the story as it is experienced by participants’ (1993, p. 311) and to make sense of the setting, the ethnographer must consider the different types of data generated using multiple methods. The last essential attribute concerns the emic perspectives of the participants, or what might be described as the ‘insider’s point of view’. The ethnographer aims to “allow the emic viewpoint of the ‘native’ to be recorded and understood” (Spindler and Hammond, 2000, p.42) in order to allow categories, nuances and meanings to emerge from the ethnographic events and encounters rather than imposing these on the setting.

It is important to point out that although I use an ethnographic method in my study, the features I draw upon do not fit squarely with the chief characteristics of ethnography as outlined above. As I have indicated, the goal of ethnography, in this classic sense, is to focus on the setting, and to describe and explain what is going on there. This process of in-depth description is sometimes referred to as ‘thick-description’ – a concept attributed to Clifford Geertz’s works on interpretive theory of culture in the early 1970’s (see Geertz, 1973). I have found such an approach not ideally suited to exploring the political questions of educational inequality, institutional practices and power relations that this thesis seeks to address. My thesis departs from traditional ethnographical perspectives, favouring a more critical approach. Traditional ethnography tends to be restricted to description and explanation which would only constrain my research to describing the narratives or to mere ‘story telling’ (Anderson, 1989, p.252) of my research participants within their cultural settings. Moreover, its (traditional ethnography) lack of attention to the complex (dialectical) relationship between language, social practice and ideology, and human agency posed a further limitation for the purposes of this thesis. My particular concern is that educational institutions are cultural sites interpenetrated with ideologies and power. Thus, ‘the process of education itself is a quintessential site for cultural proliferation and acculturation’ (Alexander, 2005, p.171). Following a number of critical theorists and philosophers (for example, Apple, 1999, 2004; Giroux, 1983; 1996; Macedo, Dendrinos and Gounari, 2003), I have argued in the previous chapters that I see school

as a form of cultural politics; schooling always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimization of particular forms of social life. It has always



been implicated in relations of power, social practices and the favoring of forms and knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present and future' (McLaren, 1993, p.168).

Consequently, this thesis takes a critical ethnographic approach that concerns itself with revealing 'the dynamics of power and cultural beliefs in stratifying people and in the reproduction of social relations and cultural beliefs. It also demonstrates the contradictions that come to dominate the lives of the less powerful' (Noblit, 2005, p.78). Moreover, the main appeal of critical ethnography to me relates to not only the workings of ideology and inequality, but also its concern with the issues of transformation and reflexivity (see Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996; Goodman, 1998; Jordan and Yeomans, 1995; May, 1997; Simon and Dippo, 1986; Smyth and Shacklock, 1998). It is important to realize that while the central task of critical ethnography is problem-solving and empowerment, traditional ethnography does not usually involve transformation or intervention of any sort. As shall become clear later, my intention is not to simply report 'what is going on' in my research setting; but to critically examine and situate black children's educational experiences (social reality) within broad social and cultural traditions. Furthermore, I sought to understand this educational reality in ways that would provide insights for the development of an emancipatory project in South African society. Accordingly, Lenzo (1995) points out that

Critical inquiry assumes, first of all, that we live in a world of unequal distribution of resources and power; and further, that if people understood they were oppressed, how that oppression operated, and they might begin to work against it, they could achieve greater self-determination and, consequently, work toward a more just society (ibid., p.17).

This point of view highlights important questions, which are particularly relevant to this thesis, about what it means to study educational reality in a context embedded in a history of unequal racialised power relations and education injustices. Here, I was reminded of Popkewitz's (1984) useful insights and his call for research that is

concerned with how forms of domination and power are maintained and renewed in society. The intent of the research is not just to describe and interpret the dynamics of society, but to consider the ways in which the processes of social formation can be modified. Finally, it posited the social world as one of flux, with complexity, contradiction and human agency (ibid., p.50).

My goal, therefore, is to foreground, interrogate and challenge the role of English in education, that is, its role in sustaining and reinforcing unequal relations within the school. Contrary to traditional ethnography, my aim in this study is to go beyond the mere description of the cultural setting (language policy and practices, complex relations of power and social constructions set up through social interactions) to changing or improving the conditions in the institution of education. As I have shown in chapter 1 and chapter 2, these questions of democracy and transformation in the context of South Africa remain pertinent in a society still marred by unequal divisions. These divisions are not only in terms of economic wealth, psychological constraints (that is, the 'colonized' mind idea) and ideologies; but also in terms of the cultural capital in education (e.g. school habitus, access to English, school opportunities).

Flowing from my discussion above, we realize that critical ethnography differs from classic ethnography in very significant ways. May (1997) describes the differences between the two methodological approaches in this way:

For the critical ethnographer, the interpretive concern with 'describing' a social setting 'as it is' assumes an objective, 'common sense' reality where none exist. Rather, this 'reality' should be seen for what it is – a social and cultural *construction*, linked to wider power relations, which privileges some, and disadvantages other, participants' (ibid, p.199).

Drawing on May's concern that 'reality should be seen for what it is' as raised in the quotation above, I deliberately reject the view of an objective ethnography that may not recognize or may conceal my lived experiences as a researcher in the classrooms in question, and further deny the political agenda that has framed this thesis. Following writers such as Anderson (1989), Richardson (1992), Simon and Dippo (1986), Smyth and Shacklock (1998) I have adopted the notion of reflexivity in my study. It would also be naïve to assume that this 'common sense' reality, as traditional ethnography would like us believe, is immune to factors such as wider social, cultural and political concerns, and that my presence in the research setting, my biases and constructs as a researcher are all irrelevant to the research process. Rather, like Simon and Dippo (1986) I maintain that a critical ethnographer must 'reflexively address [his/her] own situated character' (p.200) because by being reflexive we acknowledge that 'we are always on some corner somewhere' (Richardson, 1992, p.104). In this way, then, according to Simon and Dippo (1986) reflexivity involves "coming to grips

with the recognition that most ethnographic data is 'produced' and not 'found'" (p.200). Throughout my study, I was reminded of Harvey's (1990) insight that

Knowledge does not reside in a cupboard or on a bookshelf to be taken out, dusted down and looked at. Knowledge exists in our everyday lives. We live our knowledge and constantly transform it through what we do, as much as it informs what we do. For critical social research this means that an analysis of oppressive structures is in itself a political act. Knowing cannot be shelved, it becomes part of our life, and informs our actions which engage these structures (pp.22-23)

Given these perspectives, I have attempted to maintain a delicate balancing act of keeping aspects<sup>16</sup> of reflexivity discussed above in play throughout my study. I have openly acknowledged that my study is built on a social justice agenda and is informed by historical values. At times, I draw on my own experiences as a black female, from the historically disadvantaged community, in a society in transformation. I also bring in my experiences as a professional, middle-class person who was educated at the South African state schools during the apartheid time to the research process. To clarify my critical stance here I prefer to admit to my condemnation of what the apartheid system stood for. It is my concern that in conducting an openly value based position there is a danger of me taking an *a priori* stance with regard to the hegemonic ideological discourses and practices in my research setting. However, I have tried as much as possible to bracket out what may seem as the moral high ground throughout this thesis. The fact that I am investigating black children in a former white school somewhat positions me as both an outsider and insider or within the binary distinction between familiarity and strangeness (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.109-110). I am an outsider in that my study is based in a former white school; an educational context previously designated only for whites during the apartheid era. My South African background positions me as an insider because I am looking at South African schooling, that is, an educational situation that is familiar to me. However, I am mindful of the fact that South Africa is not a single homogenous society but diverse and defined by multiple school cultures and school traditions for instance.

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<sup>16</sup> Anderson states that critical reflexivity 'involves a dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informants' common sense constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study (1989, p.254-5).

Finally, I am aware that the pursuit of and the commitment to political goals in critical ethnography has been a subject of much criticism. For instance, Ladwig (1996, p.161) refers to critical ethnography as ‘science with an attitude’ while Hammersley’s (2006) charge is that such orientations in any research ‘greatly increase the danger of systematic bias<sup>17</sup>’ (p.11) which would inevitably compromise the quality and objective nature of that research. Hammersley goes on to say that ‘understanding people does not require sharing their beliefs, or being obliged to offer support; if it did, this would considerably reduce the range of people that could be studied’ (ibid., p.11). I would argue that such a ‘neutral or detached’ position is untenable in South Africa, a developing country and a society in transition, where democratic issues of access, opportunity, multilingualism and multiculturalism in education have become paramount (see chapter 2). I do not accept Hammersley’s critique, which I regard as mistaken, and I concur with Blair (1998, p. 15) that ‘commitment to social justice does not make the research and the analysis any more biased than the absence of commitment’. From this perspective then, it stands to reason that failure to acknowledge my particular values in this context or rather to assume a ‘value-free’ status of neutrality would be tantamount to what Ruby (1980) in his article *Exposing Yourself* refers to as ‘an obscene and dishonest position’ (p.154). Ruby concludes that ethically responsible research practices, and honest research, require researchers to “stop being ‘shamans’ of objectivity” (ibid.).

In this section of the chapter, I have discussed my approach to the research, and the research philosophy that underpins the research. In the following sections, I discuss the research process. That is, the methodology I employed to collect the data and describe the research setting.

### **4.3 Approach to the Empirical Study**

As I have mentioned in the preceding section, my research is influenced by ethnographic approaches. Ethnographic studies of life in schools have provided rich accounts of the social world of schools, particularly the complex and the multifaceted realities of school life where issues of inequality in education, including language, social class, race, ethnic and gender, remain salient (see for example, Benjamin *et al.*,

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<sup>17</sup> Also, see Hammersley (1995, 2000) for a further discussion on the issue of the role of politics in social research.

2003; Davies, 1982; Gillborn, 1990; Toohey, 2000; Troyna and Hatcher, 1992). Through spending time 'in the field' these studies describe and interpret general institutional practices, the culture of the school and patterns of behaviour in natural settings, using a range of methods such as field notes journals, observations and interviews (Burgess, 1984). LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch (1993) refer to the researcher using these different methods in ethnographic research as a 'methodological omnivore' (p.232) while Lincoln and Denzin (2000) claim that qualitative researchers are 'bricoleurs' because they choose and adapt methods as a way of eliciting the best data for the questions that the research project aims to answer. As I discuss in the next section, I drew on a range of methods in my empirical study in an attempt to get a rich and insightful picture of the cultural context, social activities and social relations in the school. Furthermore, my aim was to develop an 'authentic' and 'trustworthy' account (Walker *et al.*, 2005) as opposed to striving for the notions of reliability and validity. It is my view that the concepts of reliability and validity presuppose the contentious issue of 'triangulation'. That is, suggesting that the 'use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour' (Cohen et al., 2000, p.112) inevitably validates research, and renders it credible. Here I was drawn to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) idea that '... triangulation itself carries too positivist an implication, to wit, that there exist unchanging phenomena so that triangulation can logically be a check' (p.240). My point is that social reality is never fixed or singular as is premised in positivistic frames of reference. Rather, reality is 'messy' – it is complex, multiple and variable as my empirical study shall show.

My study emerged as a small-scale qualitative case study in a racially desegregated school in Johannesburg, South Africa. As I shall discuss later, although my particular focus was on two grade 1 classrooms, I also observed the general activities (e.g. assembly meetings, playgrounds and extra-mural activities) in the school. I also received invitations, from staff and at times learners, to attend some of the events and activities during and outside school hours. My purpose was to familiarise myself with the context, the staff and the children. I was interested in investigating the ideological premises (of English) and the hegemonic cultural practices that shape and constrain learners' behaviour in the school setting. Specifically, my study seeks to address the issue of the legitimisation of English and particular forms of knowledge, and the kinds

of identity positions or 'affordances' (as in Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2003) made available as a result of access to these resources. The fieldwork took place over a four-month period, i.e. September-December 2005, during which I used a combination of ethnographic techniques to collect different kinds of data. I initially visited the school two days a week to collect data, and later the visits were increased to 4 days a week depending on teachers' availability. This meant that I could observe each classroom two days a week where possible. These data included video-recordings of classroom activities and events, audio recordings of interviews with staff members, around-school observations (i.e. school assembly meetings, playground, lunchtime), participatory tools/learner tasks were also used to gather learners' background information, field notes were recorded and a variety of materials were collected such as copies of story books, classroom task and worksheets.

While this research was ethnographically oriented, the nature of my inquiry and approach departed from mainstream ethnographic norms often associated with observation as a method (see Section 3.2). Throughout this study, I employed non-participant observation as a method rather than participant observation or 'deep immersion' (e.g. Nader, 1993; Wolcott, 1988) as some anthropologists would like to call it. Following a number of classroom based studies (for example, Dagenais *et al.*, 2006; Day, 2002; Toohey *et al.*, 2007) observation in this study mainly involved sitting on the sidelines, writing field notes of noticeable or salient behaviour and occurrences in the whole school, as well as in the grade 1 classrooms. I was interested in passive observation because I wanted to observe and to capture the school/classroom behaviour and reality, activities and events, and complexities as they unfolded in as non-obtrusive a manner as possible. That is, my objective was to attempt to minimise the effects of my presence as a researcher on routine social and academic activities in order to compile 'thick' (i.e. capturing a lot of detail) descriptions and field notes of the everyday school life experiences. However, my 'passive' position at times generated dilemmas for the grade 1 teachers whose classes I researched, as they often asked me whether they should teach particular topics and themes, or whether children should do specific tasks for my benefit. My impression was that teachers wanted to present me with a well-orchestrated performance or neat picture of their classroom's activities. Acutely aware of this dilemma, I had attempted to overcome this fine line and challenge by informing the teachers to carry on with

their lessons as in a normal school day. Furthermore, my presence in the classroom occasionally created a situation where teachers and learners would engage me in classroom or social activities. For instance, teachers would say to learners ‘check with Ms P whether your spelling is correct’ or ‘ask Ms P what that word means’ while some learners would come and show me their work so that I could congratulate them. I was under the impression that those invitations to participate in pedagogic activities often positioned me as some kind of teacher in the eyes of the learners, thus, blurring the boundary between researcher and the researched. This blur recalls my earlier argument that I found it impossible to adopt a position that eliminated the personal from the research. I rejected the notion of a researcher as ‘disembodied omniscient narrator’ (Richardson, 2000, p.928), or in a positivistic sense, as ‘a scientist gazing through a microscope’ with emphasis on ‘the distance and difference between observer and the observed, the effort to examine intensely the tiniest part isolated from its context, the use of reliable, visible ‘hard’ data’ (Alderson, 1998, p.1007).

Having gained entry to the school, I spent the first three weeks observing the school context and writing extensive notes in my field journal, while awaiting parental permission to video-record the children (*Appendix 1 and 2*)<sup>18</sup>. When I introduced the research to the teachers and children, and to the parents in the letters of consent, I had explained that I would be video recording the classes for the purposes of this research and at no stage would the footage be used by anyone else, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. I had also indicated to the parents that their children would not be disadvantaged in any way should they wish to withhold consent in the letter, and that I would then ignore those particular children’s participation on the video during transcription. By the beginning of the third week, I had received permission letters from the parents in which they had consented that their children could take part in the research. Out of all 93 letters I had sent out in the two grade 1 classrooms I intended to investigate, there was only one child whose parents were unwilling to let him take part in the research. Although the recording of the classes could still take place, that (no permission) meant that I would have to block out any data involving that particular child.

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<sup>18</sup> Appendices 1-2 are different letters of permission addressed to the school and parents.

The video recording started in the fourth week. In both classrooms, the camera was mainly set up in the front far corner of the room, and occasionally I would move it to the back of the classroom to get a better view. Although I was mindful that the use of video camera could be intrusive, children adjusted quickly and became used to its presence. During this time of recording, I acted as the camera operator to move the camera at strategic positions and to zoom in on classroom activities and events of particular interest. Additionally, I had the task of writing up my field notes. Trying to keep a balance between those two roles (camera operator and writing field notes) was a challenge, as I had to spend more time on the camera at times. That meant that I had to keep mental notes which I could write up later, during break times or at the end of the school day. Due to financial constraints, it was not feasible to have a full time person to take charge of the camera. However, on a few occasions (i.e. three times during the whole research process) I had a research assistant with me to help me mainly with the recording. Because I was interested in classroom socialisation and identity construction of multilingual learners, the purpose of video recording, as opposed to audio recording, was to capture moments of talk, the performance of identities in interaction as well as to gain more information about the atmosphere of the class. The video footage further complemented my field notes by making it possible for me to see classroom behaviour in those sections of the room that could have been outside of my gaze during my observation.

I employed semi-structured interviews as a final source of data for my research. I did not use the interviews simply because of their data gathering potential, or as a way of 'extracting information' (Oakely, 1981, p.40) as is understood in traditional social science qualitative research. Instead, I approached the interviews as discussions to explore issues that arose from my observations and experiences at the school, and to allow for different views and perspectives to emerge. Baker (1997), for example, views interviewing as an 'interactional event' (p.131) in which interviewees provide 'narrative account[s]' (Yin, 1994) that are fashioned by discursive positions from which they speak. This is a theme taken up by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.18) who note that both the researcher and the researched speak from a particular 'class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective', all of which shape the research into what they call a 'multicultural process'. The interviews were conducted with the deputy principal (Mr Kgomo), two grade one teachers (Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo),



and the teacher assistant (Mrs Mokwena). Grade one teachers were interviewed together while Mr Kgomo and Mrs Mokwena's interviews were done individually. The interviews lasted about 1 hour to 1 hour 20 minutes, and were all audiotaped. Although I had hoped to interview the school principal, Mrs Schindler, it was not possible as she was off sick for some period. The aim of my interviews was to gather information about different things such as the school background, the language policy and practices, and to follow up on salient classroom activities, occurrences, peculiarities. I also intended to have interviews with some learners; however, it was not possible due to logistics and time constraints. For instance, I would have had to seek parental permission to interview the children, outside the formal school hours, and also to audio record those interviews.

#### **4.4 Discourse Analysis and Content/Thematic Analysis**

I began my preliminary analysis during the fieldwork, with a recursive process that involved examining different types of data – observations of school life, video recordings of classroom interactions and audio recorded interviews with teachers. My aim was to identify common themes, statements, situated and shifting meanings, as well as raise further questions that arose from that data. My analysis also informed and guided the plans for further data collection, such as the employment of learners' tasks aimed at yielding information about their language use in different domains and in friendship networks. Following completion of the fieldwork at the end of 2005, I began a more in-depth process of analysis using discourse analysis to explore teachers' and learners' talk, or spoken discourse (Cameron, 2001), in classroom interactions and activities. In addition, I examined the discourse of different members of staff during interviews and in one-to-one conversations with me. I have approached the data collection and analysis as interactive phases in my research, rather than two discrete activities. My experience is that these processes overlapped because the different stages of data collection are shaped and reshaped from an ongoing analysis of the data.

Discourse analysis covers a wide range of ways to analyse spoken and written forms of language, all of which are concerned with discourse as 'language in use' (Cameron, 2001; Johnstone, 2002; Wood and Kroger, 2000; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001). I use an eclectic approach to discourse analysis drawing on traditions associated with

poststructuralism and the work of Foucault (Gee, 1992, 1996; Wortham, 2006) as well as thematic analysis methods (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Burr, 1995; Willig, 1999) often used in psychology, but not limited to it. I have found both of these useful for the purposes of my analysis for the following reasons: the first approach considers the ways in which reality is constructed in and through discourses to produce and reproduce institutions; the second identifies patterns/themes, concepts, and shifting meanings within interactions, thus, reflecting the reality of participants. Approaching my data in this way enabled me to focus on the themes that emerged in my data as well as providing an in-depth analysis of the content of the participants' discourses. I also explored the ways in which participants positioned themselves in and through these discourses. It should be noted that I use the term 'discourse' to refer to a range of statements, repertoires, utterances, ideas and attitudes 'which order reality in a certain way. They both enable and constrain the production of knowledge, in that they allow for certain ways of thinking about reality while excluding others' (Cheek, 2004, p.1142).

My use of discourse analysis in this study is premised on the understanding that talk is constitutive and as such it constructs objects and subjects. It conceptualises the status of English and the various discourses associated with it in this former white school, as rooted in the ideologies that prescribe and constrain certain activities and subject positions. Through constructing English as meaningful and privileging those children who possess it the cultural practices then serve to perpetuate unequal relations. As Wallace puts it 'discourses are implicated in power relations in the sense that they tend to reaffirm the largely taken-for-granted dominance of particular social practices and social groups' (2003, p.2). Therefore the intention of my analysis of data yielded from interviews with staff, school observations and classroom interactions was to explore recurring themes in talk and how these exemplified commonly held and dominant discourses within the school. Furthermore, I asked: how are children constructed within these dominant discourses, and in what ways do they take up or negotiate the subject positions ascribed to them? Analysing talk (or spoken discourse) as a situated activity I aimed to 'capture the paradoxical relationship that exists between discourse and the speaking subject [because] people are, at the same time, both the products and producers of discourse' (Edley, 2001, p.190).

My data analysis process began with the watching of video recordings of classroom interactions between teachers and learners, and transcribing materials of interest. The analysis also included reading transcripts of audio recorded interviews with teachers. Because this study is concerned with how English is discursively constructed, talked about and positioned in multilingual classrooms my analysis focuses mainly on the content, and not so much on form, of the participants' talk. However, in my transcripts I provide information on form (e.g. demeanour, exclamations and emphasis in talk) in some instances in an attempt to give a composite picture of the context. In both sets of data, I identified all talk and activities in which particular themes relating to the main research questions emerged. These themes are mainly about how different languages are constructed, as well as how multilingual children are positioned and position themselves in school classrooms. For example, the themes revealed things like 'this is an English medium school'; 'children come here with no language at all' and 'children cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of their languages'. I read and re-read the transcripts in order to extract patterns, attitudes, repetitions and shifting meanings. In this process I aimed to identify the kinds of discourses that are recruited to talk about the themes. Given the large amounts of data I was working with, the analysis process was rather time consuming, often involving shuttling back and forth between my transcripts and the original video and audio recordings to get further contextual information.

I use the following transcription conventions in my study:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| (.)               | Pause  |
| (...)             | Description of Context or Additional Information |
| ...               | Omitted and Inaudible Materials                  |
| '...'             | Speaker Quotes or Uses Words of Others           |
| <b>Bold Print</b> | Speakers Emphasis                                |

#### **4.5 The Story of Johannesburg Primary School**

The site for this research study was a co-education, desegregated public primary school located in the suburban area, north-east of Johannesburg. The school will be

referred to as Johannesburg primary (JP)<sup>19</sup> throughout the thesis. JP is located in Bloomsbury - a neighbourhood with mostly brick houses, apartment buildings, and active businesses catering to a predominantly middle-class residential area. Like many suburban areas during the apartheid era, Bloomsbury was isolated for the white middle-class residents. Although the area was mainly Jewish, the demographics have since changed. It is now representative of all races, ethnic groups and languages not only from South Africa but the African continent and internationally. That said, it is important to point out that despite the cultural mix, Bloomsbury is still predominantly a white area.

JP, a single row of three drab, grey rooms, was first opened in January 1928 with 53 students, five teachers (including the school principal) for grades one to four. The following year, the school went up to grade seven. The school only catered for white students, and had a predominantly Jewish intake. The language of learning and teaching was English. By 1948, just after the World War II, and the year the apartheid government came into being the number of classrooms and students had increased. From a single row of three classrooms, JP had grown to twenty classrooms. There were now 20 teachers including the principal and 747 students on the roll. As recorded in the school files, 59.8% were Jewish, 35.96% non-Jews and 4.3% other. Because it was the only primary school in the area, JP became overcrowded forcing education authorities to build a second primary school for the neighbourhood. This enabled JP to limit its intake to manageable numbers with a permanent enrolment of 500 to 600 students. The school had a good reputation and continued to flourish until 1989 when it had to close down due to its discriminatory admission policy. By this time, the once thriving school was now struggling to maintain its status. The number of registered white students had dropped drastically owing to a number of issues. This particular historical time in SA was marked by active mobilization from members of society, which aimed to force the apartheid government to abolish racially segregated schools and open all schools (that is, white, coloured and Indian schools) to all South Africans.

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<sup>19</sup> Note that I use pseudonyms for the name of the school, the neighbourhood, staff and all learners mentioned. Attempts have been made to represent the ethnic identification of the names of all participants.

By the 1980's, black people had begun trickling into the Bloomsbury community. However, their children could not attend the neighbouring schools, including JP, simply because of their race. The low enrolment figures at JP in 1988-9 or the white-flight was mainly because of the black-white divide that was prevalent during the apartheid government. The fact that black people had moved into 'their' (white) area, and wanted access to 'their' education inevitably led white parents to move their children out of JP into homogenous white schools, perhaps with less threat of black 'invasion'. Another unsettling issue was that some of the white schools<sup>20</sup>, which had begun to adopt a liberal position, in the neighbouring communities had begun to admit children of colour. Although admitting black pupils was illegal in South Africa at the time (i.e. prior to the Clase announcements in 1991), school principals and the School Governing Bodies (SGB's) could use their discretion to admit black learners into their school. According to Carrim and Soudien (1999, p. 158) 'principals...who chose to admit black children who fell outside of the racial definitions which described their character, were legally transgressing the law and laid themselves open to disciplinary action'. It was not until the late 1980's that the government began the slow process of reforming the schooling system with an official policy that allowed white schools to admit black children. This was finally fully effective in 1991. With schools legally open to all children of colour, that meant that race was eliminated as an official criterion for admitting children into schools (for a further discussion see chapter 2).

Despite dwindling numbers, and mounting pressure from political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress of Azania (PAC), from various sectors of education and black parents for a changed admission policy, white parents still voted against admitting black children into JP. It is important to realise that because white people were the only race with voting rights in SA at the time, the government had invested white parents with the power to decide on the school policy, the school ethos and the school admission criteria. JP's failure to review and reform its admission policy led to its closure in 1989. As put in *The Right to Learn* report, commissioned by the National Education Co-ordinating Committee

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<sup>20</sup> As I have mentioned in Chapter 2, white private schools in particular began to admit black children in the early 1980's.

(NECC)<sup>21</sup> - 'its doors were locked, bolted and barred, its gates chained. The buildings looked set to become as derelict as the system of apartheid which had killed this once flourishing school' (NECC, 1990). Like many other white schools that were locked into the apartheid ideology at the time, JP had fallen into disuse despite the desperate need for quality education, resources and facilities for the benefit of all SA. This raises critical questions about educational inequalities, opportunity and access for black people, and the extent to which it was compromised. It is not surprising that by the 1980's the country was increasingly faced with revolt against 'the system' and rejection of educational services by the majority. Hartshorne (1999) summarises it as follows

...education policy...was marked by instability, and had made of the education system a site of crisis and struggle, with the system itself being permeated with contradictions and uncertainties. Because of the lack of political representation and power on the part of the great majority of South Africans, social institutions such as the school...became the centre of the struggle for liberation. The crisis in education was no new thing; it became a durable crisis, because in essence it was the national crisis of legitimacy focused on education (ibid, pp.71-72).

Not long after the closure of JP, the NECC including interested parents, teachers, community members and education organisations launched its 'All schools for all people' campaign. The objective called upon the government to urgently abolish its discriminatory education policy and to open white public schools to people of all races. As I have discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3.2) in responding to the educational crisis that had gripped the country, the government introduced the models (Model A, B, C<sup>22</sup>) in 1991 which 'strategically' gave white parents three options for dealing with the admission of black children. Although still closed down at this point, JP opted for a model C status, meaning that it would have attained support of 75-80% of the school governing body (white parents) to make such a decision. Technically, this meant that JP could now admit learners of other races. However, and perhaps ironically, the white learners had to remain in the majority (51% and above) in this new arrangement,

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<sup>21</sup> Through the initiative by the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee (SPCC) the National Education Crisis Committee, later called NECC, was formed in 1985 in response to the policy strategies of the state. From that time forward, the NECC became one of the major actors in the education struggle promulgating democratic view of education - an inclusive, non-racial and non-sexist for all people (see for example Hartshorne, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> All the models increasingly became out of reach for many black children. Model A's, mainly private, had high fees; Model B's had very strict criteria and had to remain at least 60% white; and Model C's could only admit no more than 50% of black students from the feeder areas.

that is, the model C status. It could be argued that this 'open door' policy of desegregating government schools was carefully orchestrated such that 'the cultural ethos of such schools should remain intact' (Carrim and Soudien, 1999, p.157). With quotas of how many black children could be admitted into JP, and with provision that allowed the school to maintain its character, as was the case with other model C white schools, it seems education for the majority was seen more of a problem than a social justice and human rights issue.

It was not until January 1992 that JP, now a Model C school, finally opened its doors to children of all races. As was the case with all Model C schools, the predominantly white school governing body was bestowed with the power to set and maintain standards including admission policy and the school's ethos, such as its religious or linguistic character. Towards the end of 1991, the new principal, Mrs Smith, was appointed to run one of the first public desegregated schools in the Johannesburg area – JP. Mrs Smith was faced with a daunting task of not only transforming JP into a non-racial school but appointing teachers who were prepared to embrace multicultural education. By the end of that year, 15 teachers were appointed, and of those one was a black female. Since the school had been in disuse and vacant for almost two years; the great old buildings had fallen into dilapidation and had no basic equipment to run the day to day business. For instance, the telephone system was not operational, they did not have photocopy facilities, most of the desks and chairs had gone missing. In addition, the school did not have funds in their coffers. With help from members of the community, the staff took it upon themselves to renovate the school – the school was cleaned, drains and gutters unblocked, lawns mowed and walls painted.

In its first year as a desegregated school i.e. January 1992, JP was inundated with children from many sectors of society. Admitting students was not without problems. With only 400 places to offer, the school was faced with a momentous task of screening 1400 children for admission. As was the case prior to the closure, the school remained an English medium school, with Afrikaans as the second language that was taught at the school. Consequently, the main criterion for enrolment required a 'reasonable' competence in English. In line with its official Model C status, JP used controlled quotas of admission, strict admission criteria, high fees and preference for admission was given to children staying in the vicinity of the school. 355 learners

were finally admitted to JP with each of the 12 classrooms comprising 30 learners. Although the school could not provide the statistical and racial breakdown of the learners who enrolled in 1992, the principal mentioned that there were more white learners compared to black learners who enrolled that year. The presence of black children at JP (and other white schools with black children) became a security concern, as there was the growing threat of what was believed to be right wing extremists to halt the school integration project (see NECC report, 1990). For example, several schools with black children had already been bombed, and JP in particular had received a number of threats that aimed to stop all attempts to admit children of colour. As a result, the school was provided with 24-hour security patrol that was funded by parents, business, and some non-government organisations.

In accordance with its 'new' status, the school motto, badge and uniform were changed. From then, JP's badge became a Phoenix bird out of an orange tree, mythically representing uniqueness and rebirth – symbolically meaning rising out of the ashes to new life. And the motto was now 'Strength through Education'. Although changing the status of the school was potentially positive it was not without challenges. Even though JP was desegregated, its admission policy was far from just, fair and non-discriminatory. Black children were still discriminated against on a number of levels – the admission policy favoured English, the R80 (about 10 USD) per term school fees was not affordable to an average person, and the fact that priority feeder areas were mainly white communities. It is not surprising that JP remained predominantly white, with an insignificant number of black students, and 1 black teacher. Clearly, business went on as usual with the ethos and practices in-tact. Not surprisingly, research on Model C schools like JP demonstrated that the Clase system of education was not working owing to its unjust and biased nature. Referring to the education situation after 1991 Chisholm and Fine (1994, p.240) say that 'by the beginning of 1992, black pupils were estimated to comprise only 0.88 per cent of the total enrolment of 904, 403 in formerly white schools. Of this 0.88 percent African pupils comprised 40 percent, 'coloured' pupils 43 percent, and Indian pupils 16 per cent of black enrolments at these schools'.

At the time of the research, i.e. September – December 2005, the learner and staff composition had significantly changed from what it was in the 1990s. While



previously a white-middle class English medium of instruction school catering for a predominantly Jewish intake, JP now accommodates learners from a wide range of areas in and around Johannesburg. The learner population at this school is diverse linguistically and ethnically, with a majority of black learners, a small number of Indian and Coloured learners and an insignificant number of white learners. Although the school could not confirm the exact number of white learners that were registered at the school, I saw approximately ten white learners during assembly meetings and my visits at JP. In addition, the school reported a growing number of children from other parts of the African continent such as Nigeria, Burundi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The teaching staff including the school principal comprised 23 members, 19 of which were full-time, and the rest was part-time. In addition, there were two white women administrators, three black housekeeping women, and a black man who oversaw the maintenance. Despite the changed demographics in terms of the learner composition, the changes in staffing are less dramatic. The principal (Mrs Schindler), a white woman, has been at the school for more than sixteen years, and the deputy is now a black male, Mr Kgomo. Mr Kgomo, the first black person to hold this managerial position, had been at JP for nine years at the time of the research. The teaching staff remains predominantly white and female (44%). There are a few Indian women and men (30%) while black teachers make up approximately 26%.

Based on the school's reported socioeconomic status, most of the learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds and commute to school from areas in and around Johannesburg. The school enrolls 650 learners in grades reception (grade R) through seventh. Of those learners, approximately 5% were granted official exemption by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). That meant that their school fees were waived by the GDE. Furthermore, approximately 87 learners (that is, about 13%) were catered for by the school's feeding scheme<sup>23</sup>, funded by the GDE to provide food to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Although the school had 13% of disadvantaged learners to cater for in their official records, it was not a true reflection of the situation as most of the learners had not sorted out their paper work with the social services department and some were still awaiting responses from the department. Most of the learners were bussed in every weekday from different

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<sup>23</sup> Referred to as Free School Meals in the UK.

suburbia and townships<sup>24</sup> such as Thembisa, Vosloorus, Alexander, Soweto and Midrand. In fact, most of the learners travel long distances, leave home fairly early to make it for 8am when the school starts. As one of the grade one teachers, Mrs Zondo, puts it

**Extract 1**

some of the learners leave home as early as 5:30 in the morning and by the time they get to school they are exhausted...they cannot concentrate properly in the class. It is very hard for them...I live in Soweto<sup>25</sup> and I leave home very early as well. As you may have noticed, I do let them have a nap because they are very exhausted at times<sup>26</sup> (reconstructed from fieldnotes: 13 Oct, GR1Z).

During my observations, I noticed in Mrs Zondo's class in particular that learners would simply go to the front, the carpeted area of the class often used for story-reading and story-telling, and lie down, at times take a nap. Mrs Zondo seemed quite relaxed about this and she later explained that she permitted it because some learners were often too tired to concentrate due to long distances they had to travel to school. She was sympathetic to the situation because she made the long journey herself. Like most of her learners, she travelled from Soweto to Bloomsbury every morning. Interestingly, nothing stopped the children who took a bit of 'time-off' to participate in the lesson. They could ask and answer questions or even comment while they were relaxing on the carpet area. However, this was not a common practice in Ms Bailey's class, as I did not notice any of the children making their way to the carpet unless instructed to do so during story-reading, news-time or on special occasions such as celebrating birthday parties.

This situation is a stark reminder of the past where black communities were relegated to the fringes of society such as the townships. Because they do not live within close proximity of the school, children have to travel long distances in order to receive education. Even though the school ended at 13h30 for the foundation phase programme, some children would only arrive home at 16h00 or 17h00. The fees for

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<sup>24</sup> Township is tantamount to urban slums. The townships were areas set aside by the apartheid government for black people. Most of these areas are situated far from the city centre Johannesburg. Thus, children have to travel distances of about 20 kilometres, or more, to attend former white school like JP.

<sup>25</sup> Soweto is one of the biggest townships in South Africa located, south of Johannesburg, approximately 15-20 kilometres from the school.

grades 1- 7 were R200 (26 USD) per month over 10 months, and R270 (35 USD) per month for grade R. Moreover, for township learners, parents had to pay transport costs of between R200-R300 (26-39 USD) monthly. However, most parents struggled to meet the payments. With 5% on official exemption, only 49% of learners were paying their fees in 2005; and the previous year about 51.7% had paid (interview with Mr Kgomo, 7 Dec). With half a million in deficit, the school was in dire financial straits. However, in accordance with the South African School Act of 1996, which details that no child should be denied education based on their financial status, the school allowed learners to attend classes regardless of whether they had paid their school fees in full or not.

The ringing of the bell at 8am signalled the beginning of the school day. Learners would come running from all directions to assemble at the line-up area when the weather permitted. On rainy days for instance, learners would head straight to their respective classrooms. At the line-up area, prefects (normally learners in intermediate phase) ensured that learners were in the right queues, had proper uniform and were attentive. Late- comers were recorded in a special book which was reviewed at the end of the school week. Learners were separated by the grade they were in and gender – girls were allocated different rows from boys. The lower grades were often culprits of ‘crooked lines’ and prefects would have to help them. Occasionally the prefects, invested with whistles just like the teachers, had to hold the fort until the staff arrived. This meant that prefects had disciplining powers until members of staff came. The principal, Mrs Schindler or her deputy Mr Kgomo would make announcements of particular concern and/or provide updates about certain issues, and thereafter dismiss the meeting. It seemed the discipline issue was always high on the agenda as learners were often reminded to behave themselves, to put on the school uniform and to be on time.

### **Extract 2**

Mr Kgomo: JP what time does school start?

Learners: At eight sir (in chorus).

Mr K: Thank you. I am glad you all remember. I expect you to come to school on time. Some of you drag your feet when the bell rings. That is unacceptable. Do you hear me? (emphatic)

Learners: Yes sir

Mr K: Now let's go to our classes in a quiet and an orderly manner...

[Field notes: 15 Nov]

Both staff and prefects mainly used English in their communication. On a few occasions, when a member of staff was not present, I heard some of the prefects use languages other than English. What was particularly noticeable was the kind of authority that Mrs Schindler and Mr Kgomo commanded. As soon as they arrived at the line-up area it would go silent, in most instances, and remain so until they had said what was necessary. The principal, or the deputy when in charge, seemed to exercise a high level of control, with frequent announcements over the intercom made during the lessons. I never witnessed corporal punishment at the school. However, I did hear Mrs Mokwena (the teacher assistant for grade 1-3) threaten a grade one classroom with 'Mr Sweets' when they made a noise. Although I did not enquire from Mrs Mokwena what 'Mr Sweets' meant, I later learned from the children that it metaphorically referred to smacking. It was also common practice in grade 1 classrooms for teachers to send, or threaten to send, learners to Mrs Schindler or Mr Kgomo's office when considered disruptive and disorderly. Learners often behaved themselves at the mention of the name of either the principal or her deputy.

For example, Ms Bailey punished 12 boys because they did not attend the music lesson. They were caught playing next to the pool area by one of the prefects.

### **Extract 3**

Mrs B:...tomorrow is zero tolerance (referring to the boys). Do you know what that means?

The boys: Silent

Mrs B:...it means I will not have this tomorrow. You will behave nicely and not like drunkards. You are lucky Mr Kgomo is not here today. Go and sit by the office so that all visitors can see you...[Field notes: 15 Nov, GR1B]

## **4.6 The Language Policy and Practice at JP**

Although English is the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) at JP, and almost all activities were conducted in English, the languages I heard in informal spaces or what Stein (2003, p.124) calls the 'un-policed zone' were varied. By informal spaces I refer to situations outside the official institutional practices such as teaching, assembly or extra-curricular activities. These spaces would include playtime and talk among friends in the absence of staff members or prefects. For instance, learners tended to code-switch considerably during break times, in the playground, outside the school premises (while waiting for the school bus or taxis that transport them home) and in the absence of staff. Not only were learners encouraged to speak English with the

teachers but with housekeeping and administration staff as well. That stood somewhat in contrast with the school principal, Mrs Schindler's, notion that the school embraces and celebrates diversity and different cultures of its learners (personal communication).

Inside the administration block of the school, there is a display, in glass showcases, of several awards won by individual teachers and learners, groups of learners for achievement in areas such as drama, debates, soccer and school choir. The school hall had a notice-board where all the names of past head-students were listed. There is also a wide array of student work displayed in the hallways/corridors, on the classroom doors and inside the classrooms. Noticeable is that notices, signage, posters that I came across at JP were all in English; including general instructions at the line-up area and assembly. African languages, for example Sesotho and isiZulu, were occasionally used (for a very limited time) in special social activities such as singing and drama activities which were performed in the school hall. It was noted that on these special occasions learners often performed in the presence of invited members of the public, some members of the SGB and sponsors. These intermittent activities were a classic example of the kind of 'tokenism' associated with the assimilationist practices reported in desegregated schools (cf. my fuller discussion in chapter 2). I did not observe the use of African languages in any formal spaces, despite the multicultural nature of the school, and despite the promotion and advancement of multilingualism as a major resource in education in the national language in education policy.

#### **4.7 The Classroom Settings**

Grade 1 classrooms are bright and colourfully decorated with learners' drawings, pictures, posters and materials pertaining to the classroom themes. The classrooms have the carpet area (used for story reading and news-time) in front; the library collection, magazines as well as individual lockers at the back. Lockers were used for stuff such as lunch. Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo used and taught the same materials, their classroom routines and activities were very similar. Once in the classroom, the grade 1 morning routine normally started with prayer 'Our father who art in Heaven', greetings 'Good morning Mrs Zondo, good morning Ms Pinky and good morning friends', news-time on Mondays, literacy tasks, music, media centre/library and story-

reading which was scheduled after lunch. The routine varied somewhat in terms of when music, library time or physical education factored in the roster. Mr Njovu, a Zambian, taught music at the school while Mrs Andrews, a white South African English first language speaker was responsible for the media centre. Unlike Mr Njovu who has been at the school for 2 years, Mrs Andrews has been a teacher at the school for almost 16 years and has taught different grades over the years. They had a 30 minute mid-morning break between 9h50-10h20 and a 15 minute break from 12h15-12h30. At both times children ate lunches (brought from home, or provided by the school for those who could not afford them) and then played outside for approximately 10-15 minutes while supervised by one of the teachers.

On the whole, despite the challenges of big classes, Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo are committed to their work; and have a good working relationship. They express the opinion that JP is a good school in which to work and that the children and their parents appreciate their efforts. Most of the children appeared happy and comfortable, and much classroom practice encouraged harmony and sharing. For instance, learners shared materials/resources/food and mediated information/materials when necessary. For instance, when the learners had anything to spare such as food they would give it to the teacher who would then ask the class whether any of them would like to have it. Both teachers reported to have good relationships with the parents with some of them voluntarily helping with various activities such as organising school trips and activities. Volunteers included senior citizens from the local retirement communities, all of whom were white. Most of those volunteers were women, with only a few men who used to help with extra-curricular activities such as playing chess, and swimming.

Mrs Mokwena, the only teacher assistant in the foundation phase (i.e. grade 1-3), assisted when necessary. As some learners had difficulties with English, her role was to translate and interpret whatever material into languages that learners could understand. Mrs Mokwena is proficient in a number of African languages, has a matriculation qualification and no formal training in education whatsoever. In addition to her assistant role in the classroom, she provided individual or group assistance to learners with specific tasks such as reading, spelling, mathematics, as set out by the class teachers. That is, she provided assistance to those who required dedicated attention in particular aspects of literacy learning. At times, she supervised

and/or taught in the foundation phase when teachers were absent or unavailable. Because she was not qualified, she was not keen on taking on the teacher role. She was of the opinion that ‘...it is unfair for the children to be taught by someone who is not a well trained teacher...I’m just an assistant and that is what I am being paid for...’ [Field notes: 10 Nov, GR1Z].

As mentioned earlier, the study focuses on two grade 1 classrooms, Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo, with learners aged between 6-8 years. Most of them were in their first year of formal schooling with English as a second or third language. It is crucial to mention that some of the learners were new to the English medium. They came from home situations in which English is rarely used and have little access to the language outside the school. Ms Bailey is white, of Jewish origin, English speaking with over 30 years teaching experience. She received her teacher-training diploma during the apartheid period, and remains committed to the child-centred approach to teaching as advocated in the revised curriculum (C2005)<sup>27</sup>. Ms Bailey has been at JP since the 1980s; and was a member of staff prior to the 1989 closure of the school. Effectively, she was part of the old dispensation, and is now part of the new changes at the JP. She is the class-teacher of grade 1B consisting of 47 learners; 29 boys and 18 girls. The majority of learners in grade 1B were African with a small number of coloured learners. Languages reported as home languages included English, French, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sepedi, isiZulu and Venda. The seating arrangement was such that boys were paired with girls in five rows; and those considered bright with those who experienced the most difficulties so that they could help them where possible. With 47 learners, it was difficult for Ms Bailey to devote attention to everyone. Hence the assistance of Mrs Mokwena.

Like Ms Bailey’s, Mrs Zondo (grade 1Z) class was big. Grade 1Z composed of 46 learners, 27 boys and 19 girls sitting in pairs. Each of the five rows was allocated a group name – cheetahs, zebras, tigers, lions, elephants - and all members had to ensure that no one digressed. Mrs Zondo deducted points from the group or the group would not be allowed play-time when members deviated. In addition to behavioural

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<sup>27</sup> The outcome-based C2005 promotes basic learner-centred and critical thinking principles. The national curriculum aims to develop ‘a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, multiskilled, compassionate, with respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen’ (Department of Education, 2002, p.3).

discipline, the aim of these groups was to help those who struggled academically by explaining and/or interpreting. According to her this was so because ‘...with big numbers like these it’s hard to see what everyone is doing...we have to work together...I teach them that. We help each other in this classroom...They know that’ [Field notes: 20 Oct, GR1Z]. Mrs Zondo is multilingual and speaks English, Afrikaans, Setswana and isiZulu. The classroom was also linguistically diverse and the languages that were reported as home languages included English, isiZulu, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, Tshitsonga.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

I have shown that this study mainly drew its approach from critical ethnography. I have argued against the concept of value-free research emphasizing that it is crucial for researchers to declare their own political interests and values in research. I concur with Cameron *et al.* who argue that as researchers ‘we inevitably bring our biographies and our subjectivities to every stage of the research process, and this influences the questions we ask and the ways in which we try to find answers’ (1992, p.5). This chapter describes different kinds of data collected: classroom video recordings, interview recordings, observation field notes and learners linguistic information. It also outlines my approach to data analysis. In addition, the chapter provides a brief sketch of the research setting to familiarise the reader with the cultural and historical context and the current situation at Johannesburg primary school.

The following chapter is based on interview data with the Grade 1 teachers as well as the deputy school principal. In my analysis I consider ways in which English and other languages are discursively constructed. I will argue that the monolingual ideologies of the school serve to orient and assimilate multilingual learners in year one of their formal education into dominant cultural practices and activities.



## Chapter 5

### The Construction of English in a Multilingual Primary School: Reality and Rhetoric

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have explored the basis of the hegemonic position of English in post-apartheid SA. The dominant status of English in education is shaped by a combination of historical, social, cultural as well as political forces. I have concluded that the interaction between these forces perpetuates the reproduction of dominant linguistic practices, cultural knowledge and unequal social relations which are mediated by processes of ideologies and discourses. With hegemonic ideologies and discourses, school institutions set up and organise which semiotic practices or linguistic habitus and identities are valued and have currency in the symbolic market place. In chapter 4, I have drawn on sociological thinking, in particular Bourdieu's (1977a, 1977b, 1990a, 1991) notion of symbolic domination and Foucault's (1972, 1977, 1980) concept of normalisation, to argue that the discursive construction of English as *the* cultural capital at JP contributes to the process of assimilation into monoglot ideological practices. A process of 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) often shapes and perpetuates those kinds of discourses that enable the socialisation of young multilingual children into value-laden beliefs that English has supreme value.

My main concern in my data analysis chapters 5, 6 and 7 is to explore the central links between English, ideological discourses and identity. I will illustrate from the analysis of the data I have collected how the construction of English as the natural order is embedded within relations of power. In this chapter, I draw on my interview data with school staff to focus on the (re)production of English or power-knowledge<sup>28</sup>, particularly the discursive processes which serve to legitimate a certain body of knowledge, and how this knowledge is related to institutionally/structurally determined power relations. Drawing on classroom data, the following chapter 6 will look at the consequences of that power-knowledge, or cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms, for identity positions in multilingual grade one classrooms. That is, what

<sup>28</sup> With his concept of power-knowledge, Foucault (1972) aimed to show that knowledge creates power and is a creation of power. That is, 'the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power' (1980, p.52).

identity positions and educational opportunities are made available for those learners who have access to or lack English linguistic resources? Furthermore, what are the consequences of these identity positions for agency in early education? Chapter 7 will mainly explore the question of the status of languages other than English in the school with a particular focus on how these languages are characterised in moment to moment social interactions.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986, 1991) cultural/linguistic capital, Foucault's (1977, 1980) normalisation and Gramsci's hegemony (1971) theses, this chapter identifies and outlines the institutional discursive practices at JP that establish, support, and maintain the hegemony of English. I will argue that these myriad discourses at JP not only work to privilege certain types of English as the valued linguistic capital over other knowledge, but also to apprentice young black multilingual children into a monolingual ethos. Chapter 6 and 7 will elaborate further on the fact that these monoglot ideologies that circulate at JP not only dictate what learners should embody, value, say and think, but rewards those learners who are seen to meet the linguistic expectations established in the school and disadvantages those who do not fit in with the linguistic ethos. I concur with Blackledge and Pavlenko (2002) that

language ideologies are used as gatekeeping practices to create, maintain and reinforce boundaries between people in a broad range of context...such ideologies come into being in discourses which are explicit and implicit, visible and invisible, official and unofficial, long-term and ephemeral, contested and uncontested, negotiable and non-negotiable (2002, p.131).

In the following sections, I will analyse how English, and other languages/knowledge, is constructed in the school, examining institutional discourses that mediate particular conceptions of English and serve to naturalise existing monolingual behaviour or ideologies. In my analysis I use an eclectic approach drawing on discourse analysis tools associated with the Foucauldian tradition (Gee, 1992; 1996; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Wortham, 2006) to explore recurring themes about language and use these to explain specific views and images of resources in the light of the larger social and cultural contexts. My analysis focuses on the attitudes of teachers and the deputy principal, that is, how they talked about and represented cultural and linguistic resources at the school. In particular, I will explore the patterns, messages and meanings in their talk that they use to characterise this institution.

## **5.2 Language and Institutional Ideologies in an ex-Model C School**

This section of the chapter aims to provide a thematic and content analysis of the interview data with staff members at JP. I am interested in themes emerging from the data which point to how English is referred to, as compared with other languages. I have mentioned earlier that JP is an English medium school with a multilingual learner population. Hence, English is a second or an additional language to most of these learners. I will outline the institutional attitudes towards English and the ideologies that mediate how different languages are hierarchicised in this context. In addition, I outline the extent to which these (language) hierarchies provide norms and metrics for categorising, comparing and differentiating knowledge resources and learner identities. That is, what types of discourses are constructed around knowledge/language resources, and how are these discourses used to emphasise the order of things in the language arrangements at this school? I will also explore the complex and intricate relationship between these orientations about the kinds of cultural resources that count, the school's linguistic practices, parents' attitudes and the broader ideological forces.

It is my contention, as I have pointed out earlier, that the unassailable status of English during post-apartheid education is inextricably tied to the national historico-political processes and social class as well as powerful notions of English as a global language. In other words, this issue of English in education cannot be considered outside the historically unequal power relations between black and white, segregated neighbourhoods for different racial groups, and separate school systems, complete with differential spending patterns per student. Table 1 in chapter 2 for instance, provides a vivid illustration of the government's meagre expenditure on black children's education, as compared to the generous and substantial support that was channelled to white schools. What has emerged in post-apartheid education is a massive move of black children from township schools to suburban ex-model C schools because many black parents perceive these as a gateway to opportunities, and as providing quality education and access to English resources (see chapter 2 for a fuller discussion). These details are important to remember as we embark on the data analysis.

It is important to realise that my point in this thesis is not about whether English or African languages should be used as media of instruction or not. The case I wish to advance involves the hegemony of English in a former-white institution and the extent to which this hegemony is perpetuated in multilingual school classrooms as something that is legitimate. As I have mentioned previously, I would argue that the different ways in which knowledge/languages become discursively constructed at JP represent monolithic ideologies and are therefore assimilationist. This is not to say that learners simply take up positions within historically produced discourses. Rather they negotiate, and at times subvert, the ideological positionings as shall be discussed in chapter 7.

I will analyse a range of themes that emerge from interviews with staff such as ‘things are going well...everybody is happy’; ‘Zulu as a source language...we would have a revolution’; ‘they [African languages] hit the point home’, ‘he’s talking his own language’; ‘kids with no language at all’ and ‘those [black] township parents are not as empowered as ours [white parents]’ in order to tell a story about the ideologies in the school. That is, how these interrelate, contradict and map onto each other. My data analysis will explore institutional discourses, representations, meanings and views on language and identity concerns focusing on the foundation level of schooling.

This chapter will be divided as follows: section 5.3 discusses teachers’ views with regard to the status of the language policy of the school with a particular focus on English. Furthermore, why do teachers think parents prefer English education for their children? In section 5.4 I will look at the attitudes towards Afrikaans, as well as its positioning in the school’s language policy. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 discuss the teachers’ own perceptions about the status of African languages, and the role of code-switching within the school. And section 5.7 explores the complex relationship between language, race and class, as perceived by staff at JP.

### **5.3 The English Order: ‘It was the direction that was given to us by the parents’**

Extract 4 below, drawn from the interview with Mr Kgomo, the deputy principal, begins to paint a picture about the linguistic order at JP. It should be noted here that this school, formerly a white segregated school was officially opened to children of other races in 1992. Prior to 1992, when the school was largely homogenous in terms

of race, the language of teaching and learning was English, with Afrikaans as the second language. During the interview, Mr Kgomo mentioned that the existing language policy at the time of the research (i.e. 2005) was based on the results of a language survey that was conducted in 1997. Although that survey was done in 1997, the actual language policy was put into practice in 1998. In line with a new democracy (in South Africa) with a social justice agenda, all schools were expected at that time to draw up language policies in consultation with parents and school governing bodies (see chapters 2 and 4). Following the official desegregation of schools in 1991, the racial dynamics at JP had changed with black learners in the majority by 1997, and white learners in the minority. However, the staff composition was almost entirely white, with approximately five black staff members. The school could not provide statistics in this regard but Ms Bailey who was part of the staff then estimated that they had about 60% black learners and 40% white learners which has now diminished. As a result of 'white flight', black learners were in the majority in 2005, with a small percentage of Indians and coloureds and an insignificant number of white children, as I noted in chapter 4.

Referring to the language policy and language practices at his school Mr Kgomo says the following:

**Extract 4: 'parents were democratically involved'**

R: Does JP have an official language policy, that's been decided in the school, or I mean every school has a language policy in the sense of what they actually do...

Mr Kgomo: mm yes we do actually have an official language policy because a few years ago (.) I stand under correction in terms of the year but I think it was in 1997 (R: ja) each school was supposed to draw up a language policy based on a survey...prior to that the school was...what was called the model C school which had English as the medium of instruction...when the school re-opened in 1992...it [English as the medium of instruction] remained the same...ja eh that was the case and it has since continued like that even after the survey. English was still the language of teaching and learning (.) and eh it followed surprisingly from that that the second language of choice was Afrikaans and the third language of choice was Zulu (R:Really)...

R: So would you say that the parents were democratically involved in that whole process of deciding the language policy for the school?

Mr K: yes, it was the direction that was given to us by the parents (.)....

[Interview transcript: 7 Dec]

The extract above raises interesting questions with regard to the status of English and other languages, and parents' own contribution and orientations towards the privileging of English at the school, even seven years since the implementation of the school's language policy. In particular, what is the role of parents in the perpetuation

of language ideologies that favour English over everything else? Mr K points out that the decision to have English at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Afrikaans and then Zulu is ‘...the direction given to [the school] by the parents’. Clearly, these types of attitudes provide fertile ground for the overwhelming hegemony of English in post-apartheid South Africa. By legitimating English as *the* main language and endorsing it through the school’s language policy document parents not only maintain the historical linguistic order at JP, but perpetuate the continued dominance of English. Thus, ‘prior to [1997] the school was...what was called the model C which had English as the medium of instruction [and] when the school reopened in 1992...it [English] remained the same...and it has since continued like that’. This linguistic reproduction, so consistent with the school’s previous status quo when it was still wholly white, echoes Dixon and Peake’s (2008) research findings that former white schools in South Africa tend to ‘us[e] school language policy to resist multilingualism’. Of particular interest here is how English can be used to maintain, produce and reproduce the dominant linguistic culture of the school. While it might appear that the school’s language policy is liberal because it included Zulu, a previously marginalised African language, the reality is that African languages (unlike Afrikaans) are largely seen in deficit terms as I shall demonstrate later in chapter 7. Hence, I argue throughout this thesis that the discourses of and about English as contained in the school’s language policy, as well as everyday practices, act mainly to reinforce and replicate the hegemony of English at JP while relegating other languages to secondary position.

The fact that parents, predominantly black, endorsed English as the main language of schooling from grade one, resonates with current research findings (for example, de Klerk, 2002; Granville *et al.*, 1998; Heugh, 2002b; Kamwangamalu, 2004; Mda, 2002; Mesthrie, 2008) on the mismatch between the government’s language in education policy (LiEP) and the actual language practices in South African schools where English has increasingly become invincible. As I have mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, the national LiEP promotes additive bilingualism, and in particular mother tongue instruction in the foundation years of education. However, the reality is that the spread of English in SA has led parents to opt for a ‘straight-for English’ approach for their children, and schools to provide instruction in English especially in the wake of transformation following the demise of apartheid. For instance, traditional township

schools have increasingly shifted from initial African languages instruction to the English-only medium in an attempt to maintain enrolment numbers as black parents who can afford the fees<sup>29</sup> in former model C English medium schools (like JP) in the suburbs send their children there. I will elaborate on this relationship between the hegemony of English, issues of geographical space and social class later in section 5.7 titled ‘they [black parents] brought them here [because of] better education in the cities’.

What is particularly interesting is that in the foundation phase (i.e. Grade 1-3) the teaching and learning is only in English, with Afrikaans and ‘a little bit of Zulu’ being introduced in Grade 4 as I will discuss in sections 5.4 and 5.5. On providing some specifics of the school’s language policy, Mr Kgomo summarises the details as follows:

**Extract 5: ‘they do English from Grade 1’**

Mr K:...eh they do English from Grade 1, in Grade 4 they are then introduced to Afrikaans and a little bit of Zulu and in Grade 5 they take both Afrikaans and Zulu...

Extract 5 provides a vivid picture of how multilingual Grade 1 children in particular are exposed to the idea that English is special or of superior status early on in their schooling careers. The fact that ‘they do English from Grade 1’ and additional languages are only taught in Grade 4 effectively means that learners will have their first three years of schooling immersed in highly monolingual practices – a stark contrast to the LiEP ideals of multilingualism. In this way, English is constructed and positioned as the cultural capital and as having currency (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991) within the school. This is in line with my claim that institutional discourses as well as language practices at JP are such that children are socialised (and ultimately assimilated) into monoglot ideologies, right at the beginning of formal schooling. Hence I argue that that through constant re-enactment of institutional behaviours and practices over time, English becomes ‘normalised’ and ‘naturalised’ (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980) as the only order that counts.

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<sup>29</sup> The fees for the former white Model C schools are moderately high as compared to the former white private schools, which tend to be much higher. In township schools, fees tend to be quite lower in order to allow for as many children to access education. See chapter 2 for an extended discussion.

Despite the school's rhetoric of diversity, as I discuss in the following sections, the meanings and values attached to English surpassed that of other 'official' languages at the school. With so much emphasis on English, it is not surprising that young black Grade 1 learners did not seem to appreciate their own African languages as much as they did English. Mrs Zondo, the Grade 1 teacher, explains this identification with and valuing of English that the children display as follows: 'maybe that has to do with the fact that we use English most of the time. I do encourage them to use their languages...Most of the time [these English attitudes] come from home'. In section 5.5 of this chapter, I will elaborate on the attitudes that the young Grade 1 learners display towards African languages. I maintain that the hierarchising of language at JP, particularly the hegemonic role of English in both academic and social activities within the school, effectively contributed to the devaluing of other languages.

Although not the specific focus of this thesis, the issue of young black multilingual children being introduced to an English-only learning and teaching recalls currently raging debates in literacy and language studies (see for example, Desai, 2001; Fleisch, 2008; Heugh, 2000a, 2005; May and Janks, 2004) about the repertoire of resources that children already possess on entering school, how these can be used to bridge the acquisition of English academic literacy and to facilitate learning in diverse classroom contexts. Clearly, this early transition to English at JP militates against the very core of the ambitious Revised National Curriculum (RNC) that emphasises the central role of language in literacy development in primary school education. What remains ironic, and even perplexing, is that the Revised National Curriculum has a social justice agenda aiming to provide new ways of learning and skills that are absent in the apartheid curriculum. However, the current education situation is such that the disadvantaged continue disadvantaged as many primary school children lack basic literacy skills in reading and mathematics, as I have mentioned in my introductory chapter. From a literacy point of view, it can be argued that schools such as JP where English has 'taken hold' perpetuate the disadvantage because for many children English is a second, third or fourth language.

Furthermore, the following statement in extract 4 'English was still the language of teaching and learning...even after the survey', further gives the impression that the positioning of English as the dominant language is expected perhaps because of its



link with better education, job prospects, better pay packets and middle class social status often associated with access to English – see the analysis of extracts 7, 21 and 22 for fuller discussion. Grade 1 teachers, Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo, also highlighted the idea that black parents prefer their children to be educated through English medium of instruction. According to Ms Bailey, the main reason for the increasing demand for English is motivated by the fact that ‘...they [i.e. black parents] class English with better education because of what Bantu education was before...’(as in extract 21). This reference to Bantu education illuminates the extent to which history and socio-political factors continue to shape black parents’ perspectives of education for their children. It can be argued then that the choice of English at JP is not accidental but a strategic way to create future opportunities for their children, something that black parents did not have control over during the Bantu education of apartheid.

The following extract (extract 6) succinctly captures Mr Kgomo’s own personal and professional reflections regarding the hierarchy of languages as established at his school. Commenting on whether he thinks the language policy that is developed in 1997 at JP is still relevant and representative of the languages of the children Mr Kgomo provides a professional account to say ‘...things are going well...we don’t have major hiccups...everybody is happy’. The fact that ‘everyone is happy’ with the status quo is interesting as it implies that because there is no obvious resistance or contestation to the language policy JP will continue the same as it had been in the past. In this way then, the language policy is a safe option for the school because it validates those institutional discourses tending to perpetuate and naturalise an English ethos. I will argue that this situation militates against the multilingual constitution of the school, and in turn against the children’s language resources.

**Extract 6: ‘things are going well...everybody is happy’**

R: ...in terms of your school language policy you developed in 1997... do you think it’s still practical?

R<sub>2</sub>: are you happy with...the languages you have?

M: On a personal level or on a professional level (laughter)

R<sub>2</sub>: I think both

Mr K: Eh (.) I would say on a professional level maybe things are going well (R<sub>2</sub>: ja) we don’t have major hiccups (R: ok) with it eh it has been working for the past number of years since it has been instituted. And I think it’s working well preparing the kids for high school. Everybody is happy. Things are going well. It looks like (.) but on a personal level...I would have wished to have seen a change...and eh I am

actually the Afrikaans teacher strange as it may be (laughter) I am grade 7. But I would have wished to see maybe one African language lifted to second language status by choice of the parents. That would have been my preference. But it didn't happen and maybe I don't see it happening any time very soon.

What is evident here is how a language policy document becomes a tool through which the dominance of English is entrenched and proliferated not only by parents, but by teachers as well. The fact that parents actively participated in supporting and reinventing the 'mighty force of English' (Macedo *et al.*, 2003, p.46) at JP implicates them as objects of their own disadvantage, and consequently their children. This is consistent with Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony, that through the 'buying into' a straight-for-English ideology for instance, parents not only sustain that linguistic supremacy ideology but inevitably contribute to the subordination of those multilingual children to whom English remains an additional language.

It is important to realise that while parents are given an opportunity to participate in the development of a seemingly progressive language policy at JP, this has to be within the confines of what the school can cater for. In the light of this point, I will argue that the act of involving parents is counter-productive, and somewhat of an illusion, because the linguistic question has to be in accordance with provisions of the school as an English medium institution. An important question to consider is whether these parents really have a choice given that the school already has resources to teach English and Afrikaans but not African languages. David Corson's (1999) observations in New Zealand schools hold true for JP where he argues that 'a language policy can be a powerful discursive text that works directly in the school's interest...[I]t can give the school legitimacy in the eyes of the wider public, it is a firm and powerful statement to outside powers detailing the school's various commitment and its intended actions' (1999, p.25). It is my contention then that a 'powerful discursive text' like the language policy document at JP acts as a truth-making instrument with English being constructed and positioned as commonsensical and natural.

The following section focuses on the discursive construction of and status of Afrikaans at JP, particularly the values, meanings and images that are created within the school.

#### **5.4 ‘English...followed surprisingly [by] Afrikaans’**

The fact that parents and the school governing body (SGB) have chosen Afrikaans as a second language over an African language is somewhat unexpected and puzzling: ‘English was still the language of teaching and learning (.) eh followed surprisingly from that the second language of choice was Afrikaans and the third language of choice was Zulu...’. The status of Afrikaans in SA has always been contentious as it continues to be associated with the repressive apartheid rule. Thus, it is surprising as Mr Kgomo remarks in extract 4 that the ‘language of the oppressor’ (Banda, 2000) is endorsed as a second language of choice during the post-apartheid period while Zulu remains at the bottom of the pile as in the past, as I will discuss in the next section 5.5. Of significance here is that blacks regard Afrikaans in negative terms because of its role in apartheid education, and how it was enforced to reduce the influence of English in every sphere of South African life. Given the negative attitudes that blacks still appear to have towards Afrikaans, it is therefore interesting to note that approximately 60% of black parents (the previously marginalised group) at JP have opted for Afrikaans instead of an African language as a second language. It is astounding to further note that ‘everybody was happy’ as Mr Kgomo puts it in extract 6, with such a linguistic arrangement.

The positioning of Afrikaans in particular communicates complex issues about the effect and impact of apartheid, and its role in the post-apartheid period. Despite the language rights bestowed in government policy, the changed racial demographics at JP, and the school language policy, ‘direction’ from the parents continues the legacy of the apartheid education where only English and Afrikaans were considered official. With English holding the fort as desired, the irony is that parents are probably keener to have Afrikaans as the second language than ever before. This becomes more evident in extract 6 above where Mr Kgomo provides both professional and personal accounts summarising the language situation at his school in this way: ‘I would say on the professional level maybe things are going well...it [the language policy] has been working for the past number of years since it has been instituted. And I think it’s working well preparing the kids for high school’. It is important to note here that most former white high schools still continue to offer Afrikaans as an additional language, alongside the English medium of instruction.

Though Mr Kgomo personally ‘would have wished to see a change...maybe one African language lifted to second language status by choice of the parents’ he also makes a revealing remark in extract 6 above that ‘it didn’t happen and maybe I don’t see it happening any time very soon’. This implies that the prevailing language inequities and ethos at JP, arguably a hang-over from the apartheid era, is unlikely to change because of both logistical and practical reasons inferred in extract 6 and extract 7 below. For example, we get the impression that the English-Afrikaans couplet has come to be seen as a formula that works in terms of preparing children for their high school studies as well as for employment opportunities and future careers because with ‘this extra [i.e. Afrikaans]’ learners will stand a good chance of ‘finding a job or maybe doing well outside school’. Thus, Mr Kgomo concludes that ‘there is logic in [parents’ choice of Afrikaans]’ (see extract 7).

Extract 7 below builds on the idea that ‘everybody is happy’ with the linguistic arrangement at JP.

**Extract 7: ‘there is logic in that thing [choosing Afrikaans]’**

R:... it’s about parents choices really...if you were to speculate...what do you think the reasons are [for choosing Afrikaans as a second language] and maybe it’s not speculation you may know very well.

Mr K: eh (.) you see, I think there is logic also in that thing [parent choice of Afrikaans] (R: ja)... there is a perception that you know the economy is still sitting in the hands of non-Africans. And if you’re putting good stats in terms of finding a job or maybe doing well outside school, if you have this extra, or accent in terms of you having Afrikaans as a language, it will put you in a good position in terms of finding a job. I think that’s the basic logic that I find to be true.

R<sub>2</sub>: and the same logic applies for English, the choice of English to be the main language?

Mr K: I think yes, of course. **Well if you were to say let’s have Zulu as a source language we would have a revolution ...**(laughter).

The above extract points to some of the reasons why parents continue to choose Afrikaans rather than an African language, according to Mr Kgomo. His reflection here ‘...I think there is also logic in that thing...’ and the fact that ‘there is a perception that...the economy is still sitting in the hands of non-Africans’ poignantly shows the intricate connection between language and socio-economic factors. Black parents believe that education in English, and some knowledge of Afrikaans, will eventually give their children access to the job market: ‘...if you have this extra [Afrikaans] or accent in terms of you having Afrikaans...it will put you in a good

position in terms of finding a job...that's the basic logic that I find to be true'. This perhaps explains the ostensibly strong resistance towards African languages, arguably the basis for words such as 'Zulu as a source language...we would have a revolution'. With such a pessimistic view of Zulu, it is not surprising then to learn that the school only taught 'a little bit of Zulu'. After all, only English and Afrikaans will maximise one's chances of finding a job.

In section 5.5 below, I will discuss the question of Zulu or other African languages in general, particularly the status of these languages within that institution of the school. Furthermore, I look at how the position of these languages shapes learner's own perceptions of African languages.

### **5.5 'Zulu as a source language...we would have a revolution'**

What is most striking with the positioning of languages at JP is how Zulu is discursively constructed and referred to in social interactions. I shall argue that constructions such as 'a little bit of Zulu' (as in extract 8); 'you will be in big trouble' (in extract 21) if you teach an African language; 'we would have a revolution' (in extract 7) if Zulu becomes the main language or even a language of some significance mediates everyday practice at this school. Through these discourses, we learn that Zulu is not as valued a resource as English, or even Afrikaans. In other words, the dominant meanings of English as the language of power and Afrikaans as the second best inevitably contribute to the disadvantaged position of Zulu as a language without power. It is important to realise that while Zulu is officially a third language of preference, only 'a little bit of Zulu' is introduced in Grade 4, as I have mentioned earlier.

#### **Extract 8: 'a little bit of Zulu'**

R: so (.) if then Afrikaans was a second language of choice and Zulu a third language of choice, how do you accommodate those then? I mean would the parents want them to be taught as subjects or would they be used in other kinds of ways?...

Mr K:...eh they do English from grade 1, in grade 4 they are then introduced to Afrikaans and a little bit of Zulu and in grade 5 they take both Afrikaans and Zulu to be like second (.) what can I say...it will be their second year of studying those languages...

Mr Kgomo also mentions that the Zulu that is taught from Grade 4 is mainly oral, and very basic communication, including things like greetings. That is so because unlike

English and Afrikaans, there is no required formal assessment for Zulu. Clearly these institutional conceptions of and attitudes towards Zulu not only contribute to its lower stratum status but also show lack of political will or reluctance on the part of the school to give Zulu, or other African languages, meaningful ‘air time’ in both formal and informal spaces. I mentioned in chapter 4 that I have observed that African languages are used occasionally at JP and when used these languages are restricted to social events such as assemblies<sup>30</sup> with very limited time allocation. I will argue that this kind of symbolic display of African languages further culminates in the ‘devaluing’ of the languages and the negative perceptions that learners as early as in Grade 1 hold of these languages, as I discuss below. Interestingly, even though African languages have assumed a position at the bottom of the hierarchy there are perceptions among staff that these languages are an effective tool for discipline and communication in some instances. This highlights interesting questions regarding the specific purposes that African languages are seen to fulfil within the school, as I discuss in section 5.6 below.

While statements such as ‘it’s part of our school’s mission...that we encourage and celebrate different languages and cultures’ according to Ms Bailey; and Mrs Zondo’s view that ‘it’s right to respect one another’ are omnipresent with staff, it seems Grade 1 learners’ practices and attitudes dictated differently. Through utterances such as ‘he’s talking his own language’ (as learners often spoke of any use of African languages) that have taken hold in Grade 1 we come to understand how these learners perceive their own languages, and those spoken by their colleagues at the school. Extract 9 below demonstrates the contradictions between the staff’s rhetoric of multiculturalism, and how children themselves imagined and represented African languages in their talk.

**Extract 9: ‘he’s talking his own language’**

R:...we [i.e. researchers] noticed for example observing some of the assemblies...that children are using other languages...it is not English only...they sing in other languages (.) sometimes there might be a Bible reading in Sotho or whatever and we

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<sup>30</sup> The school assembly was a grand event often attended by company representative sponsoring some children or activities in the school; parents as well as community members. The assembly was forum in which individual learners were rewarded for various academic and extra-curricular achievements with certificates or prizes. Normally the social activities would include things like singing, drama, and occasionally the reading of the Bible in which ‘a little bit of Zulu’ or other African languages was used. See chapter 4 for an extended discussions.

wondered to what extent that is just spontaneous or to what extent it's actually encouraged by staff at the school?

Ms B: I think it is part of our school's mission...that we encourage and celebrate different languages and cultures you know...

Mrs Z: It's right to respect one another

Ms B: It's all part of that (.) diversity. There are schools that we talked about before that do not this [celebrate diversity]...they fine the children; they punish the children if they speak their languages and sometimes even here I'll have a child come and say 'he's talking his own language' (interrupted) they shouldn't be doing this you know

Mrs Z:...in my class you would hear them say 'Mam so and so is speaking to me in Sotho'. I think it's because we use English most of the time, all the time, it's the main language...

[Interview with Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo, 7 Dec]

The staff presents a very liberal view regarding the language practices at JP claiming that unlike in other school institutions where '...they fine... [and] punish the children if they speak their languages' all social, cultural and linguistic differences are valued at JP. However, the reality is that English dominates everyday school life, and other languages are rarely employed as I have pointed out earlier. This situation communicates a message about the respective values of African languages and further engenders particular attitudes towards these languages. I will argue then that the intermittent or restricted use of Zulu and Sotho at this school, and how they are positioned in everyday school practices has an impact on how learners viewed them. Furthermore, I believe that institutional attitudes legitimated and entrenched the idea that these languages are insignificant and trivial. In light of these moments that reveal the school's ideological position on privileging English over everything else, it is unsurprising that learners policed each other, particularly if one of them 'defaulted' and spoke languages other than English. Hence, proclamations such as 'Mam so and so is speaking to me Sotho' (in extract 9 above) are reported to the teachers as if that kind of linguistic behaviour is something that should be disciplined, and perhaps be ashamed of.

The attitudes towards other languages that these children display illustrate that they conceived of African language as somewhat abnormal behaviour. Despite Ms Bailey's 'official' view that 'they shouldn't be doing this you know' it is clear that children's perceptions of what linguistic resources count militates against the very attitudes of multilingualism and multiculturalism that the school claims to support. According to Mrs Zondo children monitored each other's linguistic repertoires '...because we use English most of the time, all the time, it's the main language...'. Mrs Zondo's

statement is revealing as it shows the extent to which Grade 1 one children are encultured into a monolingual ethos; as well as the implications of such socialisation practices for resources other than English at JP.

Extract 10 below also demonstrates how Grade 1 children have learnt to devalue their African languages. The mere fact that ‘they laugh [or giggle] when someone else prays...in Zulu or another language’ is telling. Even Ms Bailey says that she finds these attitudes interesting. Mrs Zondo presents a rather firm view to show her disapproval of such behaviour ‘I remember asking them to pray in any language and there were giggles...during the middle of the prayer I heard giggles...I spoke to them thoroughly...From that day it stopped’. While both Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo are seemingly surprised and astonished by this reaction it is clear that these young children have come to understand the concept of linguistic worth. That is, that some linguistic products are valued more highly than others within the market place of the school. It is not surprising then that black learners at such an early stage of education see their languages as inferior, while viewing English as superior. This supports my argument in this thesis that the dominant positioning of English at JP, specifically the extent to which it mediated both the social and academic interactions shaped children’s attitudes towards Zulu, and other African languages.

**Extract 10: ‘They laugh when someone else prays in Zulu or another language’**

R: ...in terms of the stories that they tell...do they ever use other languages...or do they just tell their stories in English?

Ms B: English mainly...if they are sitting with their friends...or when I say OK you take this book and you read out the story with your friend then they might bring in another language. But usually they communicate in English...they feel that they are expected to it only in English...

Mrs Z: (inaudible) I remember asking them to pray in any language and there were giggles...I was very angry...during the middle of the prayer I heard giggles...I spoke to them thoroughly and they stopped. From that day it stopped...

Ms B: Sometimes before eating lunch I ask them to choose someone who could pray in Zulu or another language and the reaction is laughter. They laugh if someone else prays in another language or says ‘Thank you for the food we eat’ in Zulu or another language which I find very interesting.

Commenting on where they think these attitudes towards African language come from, Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo put it in this way:



**‘Those attitudes [the devaluing of African languages] come from home’**

R: I think there’s something interesting going on around how children themselves value African languages and English. I just wondered whether you have some idea about where that is coming from.

Ms B: It is not coming from us [the teachers]. It’s definitely not coming from the school.

Mrs Z: Most of the time those attitudes come from home...we encourage them to use their languages.

Of interest here is how Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo quickly defend what is obviously an unequal treatment of language at JP claiming that the children’s attitudes of African languages emanate from home. While that may be the case, given how parents perceive education in English, the role of school in the formation of discourses and particular ideologies can not be understated. It is my contention that the deficit terms with which African languages are often constructed and the fact that these languages are limited to insignificant roles within the school contribute to the devaluing of these languages. For instance, although Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo mention that ‘[they] encourage [learners] to use their languages’, we also learn that these languages are not used regularly but only seldom for things like prayers ‘sometimes before eating lunch I ask them to choose someone who could pray in Zulu or another language and the reaction is laughter’. With this in mind, it could be argued that because African languages are not as normalised as English, children find it ‘strange’ when the languages are called upon unexpectedly.

Building on my argument that unlike other languages, English is established as natural and commonsensical at JP, the following excerpt, for example, illustrates the overwhelmingly English language practices at JP. Commenting on the spread of English within different domains, and the lack of use of African languages, Mrs Mokwena a multilingual teacher assistant, and also responsible for the after care facility, cites the following:

**Extract 11: ‘At school...they don’t use their home languages’**

Mrs M:...I have noticed that most of the children when they are here at school they speak in English all the time...They don’t use their home languages

R: What about those who come to the after-care?

Mrs M: even when they come to me here [at the after-care centre] they use English all the time...even with me...They know that English is the language we use all the time. This is an English school {R: ok}

While she acknowledges the importance of English in her school ‘this is an English school’, she also highlights the fact that children do not seem to use African languages, even with her. By positioning herself in this way, Mrs Mokwena seems to imply that because of her role as a multilingual teacher assistant she expects these children to use African languages with her. That positioning is particularly interesting because Mrs Mokwena, even in her capacity as teacher assistant, rarely uses African languages as my classroom data in chapter 7 will illustrate.

**‘It’s very nice to know all languages...it’s like when you mix colours’**

R:...in terms of African languages, do you think kids should use those languages?

Mrs M: It’s very nice to know all languages {R: mm} not only from Africa but overseas too {R: mm} It’s like when you mix colours. English is the main language and we must use it but it is important that kids use their languages as well.

Statements such as ‘it’s like mixing colours’ give the liberal impression that the issue of diversity is important. However the following constructions ‘they [children] speak in English all the time’ ‘they don’t use their home languages’ and ‘English is the main language and we must use it’ all appear to point to highly English dominated practices. This idea of ‘mixing colours’ also trivialises African languages because English is still conceptualised as the ‘main language and we must use it’. Therefore, it will be naïve to assume that those young children in grade 1 are unaware of the scant attention paid to African languages; and the currency that English has in the school, as shall be discussed later in chapter 6. For instance, in the discussion with Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo below it is clear that having access to English and lack thereof determines whether children are academically successful or not within the institution. Responding to the question of what knowledge resources they consider as benefit or detriment to learning Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo both suggest that English knowledge is necessary.

**Extract 12: ‘my top ones [i.e. learners]...they are very good in English’**

R: what makes a child a successful learner in grade one and manage progress well while other don’t...do you think that it’s [success] equivalent to proficiency in English or is it about more than that? And if so what?

Mrs Z: most of the children are talking English at home...for example those [children] whose parents are reading books with them do well [because] most of the time they use English to communicate...we encourage parents to do that [read and communicate in English]

R: so if you think of top learners in your classes are they most proficient in English or not necessarily?

Mrs Z: my top ones (.) they are very good in English...most of them  
 R: do they come in the beginning of the year with quite good knowledge of English as well?  
 Mrs Z: ja most of them...some of them had attended grade R here so they would be proficient  
 R: Is that the same for you Ms B?  
 Ms B: eh I think yes...I mean Sarah wasn't good when she came in but she had been to grade R so she already had some knowledge...and Anna comes from a very educated family. Her father is in the police force and I think he does most of his studies [in English], he has just been studying again in English...so yes I would say that they have come in here with definitely some knowledge of English...maybe even speaking it at home most of the time...

The example above builds on my earlier argument that children are conscious of the values that are placed on English proficiency. This explains why these young children often tell on each other and report any linguistic behaviour which seems amiss. We learn here that most of the learners who progress well academically are proficient in English 'my top ones [learners] they are very good in English' and that they 'maybe even speaking English at home most of the time', according to Mrs Zondo. It also implies that academic success is not only linked to English but social class as well: 'Anna comes from a very educated family. Her father is in the police force and I think he does most of his studies [in English], he has just been studying again in English', as Ms Bailey puts it. Presumably, these children whose parents are educated and whose parents 'read [English] books with them' (in extract 12 above) at home are more likely to do well at school than those who do not have access to such resources. This is in line with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) argument that schooling tends to advantage those children who come to school with knowledge resources that the school expects, and disadvantages those without the same kind of resources. As I have discussed in chapter 3, similar findings were evident in both local (for example, Blommaert *et al.*, 2005) and international research (for example, Bourne, 2001b; Martin-Jones and Saxena, 2003; Heath, 1983) showing the extent to which school institutions contribute to reproduction and inequalities in education by drawing unevenly on the kinds of language/knowledge resources that children possess.

## **5.6 ‘It is always better to code-switch where you think you’ll hit the point home more effectively in an African language’**

I have mentioned earlier in the chapter that apart from mere symbolic significance, African languages are seen as communicative tools for clarifying points/messages and for disciplinary purposes. Extract 13 below further shows the limited roles that these languages play, the restricted spaces of use as well as the kinds of meanings attached to their use. It is my contention here that by confining these languages to mainly non-mainstream and emblematic functions, social inequality and unequal power relations are perpetuated. In this section of the chapter I specifically look at the staff perceptions and attitudes regarding the role of code-switching and the kinds of purposes that it serves. I aim to elaborate on one of my arguments in this thesis that the ways in which Zulu and other African language resources are constructed, how these resources are compared and differentiated on the basis of their relation to English (i.e. the standard) inevitably positions them as somehow ‘second-class’ and an inferior means of communication, as is evident in the following discussion extracts.

Commenting on the same question asked in extract 9 about the status of and use of languages other than English in both formal and informal situations Mr Kgomo says:

### **Extract 13: ‘they [i.e. African languages] hit the point home’**

R:...what about the language policy as to how it operates outside the classroom? We’ve been talking about the formal classroom and medium of instruction...but is there any kind of policy on the use of languages other than English outside the classroom?

Mr K: I think we encourage it [i.e. the use of other languages] as much as we possibly can from management...if you look at assembly...it is a situation outside the classroom but it’s a formal thing. And the code-switching that happens in the assembly, I think comes first spontaneous and I think to try and send the actual message across. It is always better to code-switch where you think you’ll hit the point home more effectively in an African language. I think it is encouraged but it is also spontaneous.

Like in extract 9, the discourses in extract 13 seem to imply that the school makes an effort to treat all languages the same: ‘we encourage it...as much as we possibly can from management’. Even though this gives an affirmative impression regarding the multilingual environment, we immediately learn that when children are exposed to African languages it is primarily through code switching so as ‘to try to send the message across’. In fact, the sole purpose of code switching is generally to ‘hit the

point home' when staff deems it necessary to do so in order to emphasise specific communicative information and for disciplining purposes. Thus, 'it is always better to code-switch where you'll think you hit the point home more effectively in an African language'. In this way, code-switching in and out of African languages is portrayed as a practice with robust affective communicative power. This idea that code-switching is seen as an essential tool is also evident in the excerpt below (as continued from extract 13) in which Mr Kgomo mentions the benefit of having multilingual teachers at JP:

**Extract 14: 'Having African teachers on our staff...that's a huge advantage'**

Mr K:...in the classroom we have the advantage of having African teachers on our staff {R: yes} and because of that it's easier for our educators to code-switch {R: mm} when and where necessary. I think that's a huge advantage in this school in comparison to a lot of other schools maybe in the area.

R: so you do encourage that (.) I mean as a tool for learning.

Mr K: Absolutely yes absolutely

Like Mr Kgomo, Ms Bailey a monolingual English language speaker, is of the opinion that code-switching is a valuable resource. Reflecting on her own practices in multilingual Grade 1 classrooms, Ms Bailey laments her monolingual status as a disadvantage in her teaching: 'I feel that I am at a disadvantage some times'.

**Extract 15: 'Her [Mrs Zondo's] big advantage in the classroom [is that] she can code-switch straightaway'**

Ms B: It's unfortunate [not knowing African languages] because sometimes I have to call on Mrs Z to come and help me when I don't have Mrs Mokwena [teacher assistant]...which is quite often... That's [access to African languages] her big advantage in the classroom...she can code-switch straightaway. I do use children as well but you do it in a way that make them feel they are helping [because] after a while the children get resentful because they are always having to translate whatever the teacher says...and sometimes they feel like you are interfering with their work...I feel that I am at a disadvantage some times...

Both Ms Bailey and Mr Kgomo regard code-switching as a resource for teaching and learning. For Ms Bailey knowledge of African languages could potentially benefit classroom activities hence she says that '[Mrs Zondo's] big advantage [is that] she can code-switch straightaway'. Similarly Mr Kgomo mentions that the presence of African teachers in the school has a positive impact because 'it's easier for our educators to code-switch...when and where necessary'. However, Mrs Zondo one of the African teachers, provided a rather contrasting view on the question of using languages other than English during classroom literacy activities.

**Extract 16: ‘I use children...to translate or interpret’**

Ms Z: I use children most of the time to translate or to interpret what I’m saying...I pair those with good English skills with those children who are struggling...and maybe change the buddy person after a while because they are all keen to help...English is the main language. I communicate in English so that it can be easier for them to understand us.

Despite Mrs Zondo’s access to a variety of languages, it appears she does not employ code-switching in her teaching, at least based on what she says here. What is particularly interesting is that whilst she seems not to engage in the practice herself she is able to do so in the service of colleagues. For instance, Ms Bailey mentions that ‘sometimes I have to call on Mrs Zondo to come and help me when I don’t have Mrs Mokwena [teacher assistant]’. Instead, Mrs Zondo prefers to ‘use children most of the time to translate whatever [she says]’ and that is achieved through a buddy-person system where ‘those with good English skills [are paired] with those children who [are] struggling’ – still a very deficit way of using code-switching. Even though Mrs Zondo is seen to be in an advantaged position by her monolingual colleagues, she pointed out that ‘English [is] the main language. I communicate in English so that it can be easier for them [learners] to understand us’. We seem to get an impression here that by sticking to English Mrs Zondo aims to benefit her learners ‘so that it can be easier for them to understand us [teachers]’. Although Mrs Zondo is not against the use of code-switching in learning, it became apparent during the interview that her reluctance to use the practice herself may have been due to parents’ attitudes towards the use of languages other than English at JP. In extract 21 in section 5.7 for instance, Mrs Zondo alludes to that fact ‘if you teach their children their language then you will be in big trouble’. This perhaps explains why she is not keen to switch between languages during her teaching, even though she is proficient in a number of African languages of her learners.

The next interview excerpt follows on from extract 9 in which the effective communicative functions of code-switching are highlighted. Here we learn that while switching to African languages is used ‘when and where necessary’ only certain varieties of Sotho or Zulu can ‘hit the point home’ better as compared to others. Commenting about which languages are useful in helping to put the message across to learners or clarifying some issues Mr Kgomo says:

**Extract 17: 'If I mould it [an African language] it gets to be more effective'**

R: In terms of the choice of languages you make, what would be that language that you would use spontaneously if you want to hit the point home?

Mr K: eh in our school it would be Sotho languages...not necessarily Sesotho (R: mm) Sotho languages would hit the point home better than Zulu would. And myself, being in a position of speaking a whole lot of languages eh I find that when I use Zulu I personally tend to use like Grade A Zulu (laughter) which seems really not to hit home with the kids (R: ja) And I find that with Sotho (.) if I mould it, it gets to be more effective (R: mm).

At this point, it is important to refer back to section 5.3 where I discussed the language policy at JP in order to situate the seeming mismatch between policy on paper and the actual practices. Although Zulu is official at least according to the school language policy, it is interesting to note that 'Sotho languages would hit the point home better than Zulu would'. That is the case because the dominant African languages spoken at the school are Sotho varieties<sup>31</sup> and not Zulu as is recorded in the official school policy. Hence, this raises questions about the status of language policy at JP; to what extent is it representative specifically with regard to African languages. The example below clearly shows that the linguistic situation in the year 2005 has changed drastically since that policy was instituted in 1998.

R:...what are the different languages that are spoken by the kids that you are aware of?

Mr K:...It is mainly the Sotho [group of] languages

Reflecting on his own linguistic practices, Mr K mentions that 'I personally tend to use...Grade A Zulu which seems really not to hit home' but 'I find that with Sotho (.) if I mould it, it gets to be more effective'. What he means is that using standard or formal varieties of Zulu and Sotho do not yield results and so is not as effective. Hence he tends to 'mould' the language to meet the communicative needs of the learners. This notion of 'moulding' seems to imply that learners have limited proficiency in standard Zulu and Sotho languages, and thus simplified forms are used. Considering that children are introduced to a 'little bit of Zulu' only in grade 4, it is not surprising that code-switching in Grade A Zulu is not efficient. The other reason why children are not proficient in 'standard' or Grade A Zulu can be linked to the fact that they come from urban townships around Johannesburg and as such speak what Calteaux (1996), Finlayson and Slabbert (1997) and Stroud (2001) have conceptualised as urban varieties which represent the diverse nature of their language

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<sup>31</sup> The Sotho group of languages include Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana all of which are somewhat mutually intelligible.

practices in these multilingual environments. Referring to the language use in urban settings in SA Stroud (2001) argues that African speakers 'move into, between, and across many different semiotic practices, exhibiting multiple and varied practices of language use, such as language crossing and mixed registers' (ibid., p.350).

This view of 'hitting home' is interesting because it alludes to a number of concerns vis-à-vis when, how and for what purposes code-switching is employed at JP. While Mr Kgomo initially expresses regret that 'I would have wished to see maybe one African language lifted to a second language status by choice of the parents' (extract 5 above) and the staff continually state that the school promoted multilingualism, the following extracts further suggest the continual diminution of African languages. We get the impression that code-switching or any use of African language is engaged as a default mechanism for what is perceived as linguistic incompetence: 'there are kids like I said...who are coming to the school with no language at all...in those instances I do eh speak an African language'.

**Extract 18: 'kids with no language at all'**

R: what about eh when children are brought to your office say for discipline...when they have misbehaved...do you use only English in communicating with the child and finding out what's going on there or might there be the use of other languages in that kind of situation?

Mr K: It would be mainly done in English {R: ja} eh even when the child is brought to me {R: mm}...there are kids like I said, kids from the rural areas for example who are coming to the school with no language at all and in those instances I do eh speak an African language trying to find out what the problem is.

Later in the interview it also becomes apparent that the 'no language' situation with Grade 1 learners poses problems for white teachers in particular. This is so because most of them are monolingual English speakers, with some proficient in both English and Afrikaans. The point I wish to advance is that the presence of 'a teacher assistant who can code-switch to Zulu' in order to 'help the kids...struggling with English as the medium of instruction' inevitably denotes code-switching as a practice used only for English incompetence on the one hand, and further categorises specific children as mediocre. As in the case in extracts 13, 14 and 17, we see perpetual use of discourses that anchor and privilege English-only use, reducing code-switching to a meaningless practice.



**Extract 19: ‘no language at all [a problem] especially for our white teachers’**

R: in terms of the problems that may occur in relation to language in the school...you have mentioned a couple of times that this could be [because] some children come into Grade one with no language or English...So does it create particular problems...and what is your view on that?

Mr K: yes it does eh especially for our white teachers...and I think that’s why we have...made sure that Grade ones and twos at least get a teacher assistant who can code-switch to Zulu. And then in grades 3, 4 and upwards there is an African teacher who can be able to help the kids...struggling with English eh as the medium of instruction or communication...(R: mm) there aren’t huge problems as far as English as a medium of instruction or language of teaching and learning is concerned...we have a lot of refugees now who have moved into the area...French speaking and this being an English school, we have had problems in that regard...

Against this background, it can be argued that code-switching is seen more in deficit terms than as a communicative resource. That is, when put to use it is generally to compensate for lack of English as opposed to consolidating and facilitating children’s knowledge. There is a large and growing volume of research, both locally and internationally, on the role of code-switching in multilingual contexts such as this one. This work continues to produce diverging views, with authors of a more purist bend claiming that it interferes with the learning and acquisition of English (e.g. Kgomoewana, 1993, Swain, 1986). On the other hand, other researchers maintain that it is a communicative resource which could accomplish social and academic objectives (see Chick, 1996; Ferguson, 2003). My aim here is not to debate whether code-switching is a communicative and pedagogic tool or not. I rather wish to argue that the ideological positioning of African language as lower stratum languages, with no meaningful value whatsoever, inevitability constructs English as the language of the dominant order.

Similar to the preceding extract 19, the example below shows the extent to which English proficiency is highly rated. For instance, the fact that only white senior citizens, or ‘[white] grannies’ as they are affectionately referred to, are tasked with the duty of helping ‘those kids who [were] battling with English’ says a lot about the school’s orientation towards English as a valued resource. Commenting on how the school assists those children that are viewed to have ‘no language’ Mr K said:

**Extract 20: ‘We send those children battling in English...to the [white] grannies for a one-one interaction’**

Mr K:...we have been fortunate to have the grannies to help us. I don’t know if you have noticed them. Those are senior citizens who give valuable time coming into the

school. And what we do...we send those kids with no language or with no English at all to those grannies for a one-one interaction, for them to read a story eh in a more relaxed atmosphere so that the child is freer...we do give a little bit of training to the grannies on what to do with those kids who are battling in English.

R: And do you find that that's quite successful?

Mr K: Ja absolutely because some of them are actually ex-teachers themselves.

The notion that some 'kids [have] no language at all' expresses important points about the relationship between language, power relations and identity. The fact that limited proficiency or limited competence in English equals 'no language at all' is an interesting one. These kinds of perceptions are also evident in Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo's communication, as they often referred to learners with English difficulties as 'children without an established language', 'children who can hardly say a word of English' or 'children with no English at all'. Thus I will argue that such discourses and ideologies not only served to legitimate English as institutional cultural and linguistic capital but also have consequences for the range of identity positions that learners can claim and not claim as shall be discussed in chapter 6.

### **5.7 'They brought them here [because of] better education in the cities'**

Extracts 21-24 below, as represented in the interview data with both Grade 1 teachers, further shows that the irrefutable positioning of English, or the issue of language, is tied to South Africa's past. I have discussed earlier that for historical reasons, suburban ex-model C schools such as JP are perceived as a gateway to success. This sector of education is regarded as the best in the country (for black children) representing quality education, better resources including educational and sports facilities, well-trained teachers, access to English and so forth. The status of these schools contrasts rather starkly with that of township schools often perceived to symbolise poor resources, poor learning and teaching environment and sometimes ill-trained teachers lacking motivation. Considering this background, the analysis here brings about intricate connections between language, class stratification, race, geographic space and education. While all these axes of inequality intersect in dynamic and complex ways in education, my discussion will be limited to those salient ways in which these factors become represented or talked about at the school. I begin with some comments on why Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo think that black parents preferred to send their children to JP:

**Extract 21: ‘they [black parents] class English with a better education’**

Ms B: ...when the school became open to everyone (.) you know...people wanted that better education in the cities...I think. But I think...some parents have thought it through as far as understanding the environment the child comes from...and...I think that’s the main the main reason (R:mm) I think they class English with a better education because of what Bantu education was before...

**‘You’ll be in big trouble if you teach their children their language’**

Mrs Z: ...and you know what...if you teach their children their language then you will be in big trouble because one thing...I mean they’ve got schools nearby their homes where they could have sent their children but they brought them here. Why? because of the language and better education and the facilities of course

There seems to be consensus among staff that for black parents English is a marker of success, and considered an economic value. According to Ms B for instance, parents ‘class English with a better education’. Thus they ‘see the need for English to be taught from an early age’ perhaps because they ‘are in a job [or] in a company where...they work with English a lot’ (in extract 24 below). Similar comments about the link between English, the socioeconomic environment and ultimate upward social class mobility are made by Mr K in extract 7. These attitudes towards English provide necessary and valuable insight about the power of English throughout education in contemporary South Africa, particularly the juxtaposition with social class.

Mrs Zondo’s blunt remark that ‘if you teach their children their language...you will be in big trouble’ and her emphasis that black parents chose this former white school over traditionally black schools because ‘of the language [English] and better education facilities and the facilities’ is revealing. That implies that even 11 years down the line South African education is ‘still grappling with the apartheid legacy of separate and unequal schooling’ (Moletsane *et al.*, 2004, p.61). Both extract 21 above and 24 below highlight complex questions that ‘race remains the primary point of reference’ (Soudien *et al.*, 2004) and geography is still a pivotal variable in post-apartheid education.

**Extract 22: ‘where there is white person everything goes well’**

R: ...so would you say parents (.) send their kids here mainly because you teach the language?

Ms B: yes and that is what they want for their children, different kind...you know a better education as they see it (R:mm)...

Mrs Z: I usually tell them [black parents] that ‘you take your children to the suburbs even if you don’t go there [to the suburbs] yourselves’...

R: why do you think this is the case? It’s just out of curiosity...

Mrs Z: because they don't take black education very seriously (R: mm)...  
Ms B: it's almost like they don't value that...  
Mrs Z: where there is a white person (R:mm) then everything goes well...

As appears to be the case here, a better education, and eventually proficiency in English, is seen to be rationalised in terms of space (i.e. suburban areas or cities): 'they've got schools nearby their homes where they could have sent their children but they brought them **here**', as Mrs Zondo put it in extract 21. She also states that parents' motivation for sending their children to suburban schools is because 'they don't take black [township] education seriously' and more importantly 'where there is a white person...then everything goes well' (as in extract 22). I shall discuss the educational consequences of this connotation that white equals superiority in the next paragraph. These statements bring up intersecting societal dynamics including entrenched polarities between white and black education, suburbia and townships the manifestation of which reflects the deep effects of apartheid. For instance, because apartheid segregated residential spaces aimed to build and maintain barriers between racial groups in all spheres of life post-apartheid education has been marked by the exodus of black children who have had to 'make the journey' to former white well-resourced suburban schools like this one. Although the desegregation of schools in South Africa created an opportunity for learners from all races to attend whichever school they prefer, the black township schools remain mono-racial. As is reality in contemporary South Africa, most black learners have to travel long distances, often paying exorbitant transport fees, to access superior educational facilities of former white institutions such as JP.

Ms Bailey's anecdotal evidence below sketches some of the dynamics associated with 'better education in the cities' as black parents see it. Note that this example flows from extract 13 above.

**Extract 23: 'I like the way you are doing things here'**

Ms B:...Beatrix has really been struggling. Her mother is a teacher {R: ok} She teaches in Alexander at quite a well-known school (.) and she has great difficulty paying for her you know...Beatrix is here one day and the other days she is not ...in and out...eventually I said to her...you should consider taking her to a school near you where she could walk to school to solve her problem of transport...she keeps saying to me 'you are doing a good job, I like the way you are doing things here'. And you know this is from a woman who is {R: a teacher, a professional}

Explicit comments such as ‘I like the way you are doing things here’ inevitably points out continued inequities in education, where schooling in former English white institutions ‘where there is a white person’ remains highly regarded on the one hand. On the other hand, black schools are still tarnished with negative attitudes because ‘[parents] don’t take black [township] education very seriously’ and ‘it’s almost like they don’t value [it]’ according to Mrs Zondo and Ms Bailey respectively. The impression that ‘everything goes well’ where there is an image of ‘whiteness’ echoed residues of apartheid in which ‘whiteness was [constructed] fabricated and presented as morally, intellectually and biologically superior contrasted to blackness as subaltern’ (Vandeyar, 2008, p.286). Thus, whilst schools like JP have become racially desegregated learning environments the entrenched polarities of whiteness and blackness remain. That raises critical questions about language, culture and identity issues as well as its implications for ex-model C schooling. I will address the intersection between these concerns in the following chapters where I look at the actual classroom and school practices at JP. For instance, studies have indicated that in the vast majority of desegregated schools in South Africa, black children are expected to adopt the dominant culture and ethos of former white schools (for example, Carrim and Soudien, 1999; Soudien, 2004 ). Essentially, this mentality, so consistent with apartheid’s schooling, positions the white cultural ethos as superior, and something that black children need to assimilate to. Despite policies of desegregation of schools aimed at providing opportunities for integrating learners, and teachers, from different groups in the same school, Vally and Dalamba (1999) have concluded that former white schools continue to replicate the hegemonic dominance of whiteness synonymous with the past and thus the race factor remains as powerful as before. These findings correlate with my argument that the conceptions of and constructions of English in the foundation phase at JP, mainly serves to support a monolingual ethos consistent with the school’s old linguistic order when it was still white.

Commenting further on the question of why black parents choose JP, an English medium school in a formerly white suburban area, a location that is not easily accessible to most of the children, Ms Bailey puts it this way:

**Extract 24: ‘those township parents are not as empowered’**

Ms B: ...and maybe those township parents are not as empowered as our [white] parents yet you know...and also I think the choice of having their children learn English (.) you find that there are parents who are in a job, in a company where you know they work with English a lot. May be professional people...personal assistants...people they are working with in that environment and see the need for English to be taught from a very young age...

While Mrs Zondo claimed earlier that parents prefer JP ‘because of the language [English] and better education and the facilities of course’ (extract 21) for Ms B the decision to send children to an ex-Model C school can be because ‘those [black] township parents are not as empowered as our [white] parents’. The discourse of empowerment is interesting as well as complex; and can be read to mean that black parents are not positioned or well-informed to make such decisions regarding their children’s education whereas white parents are better placed, on the one hand. But Neville Alexander (2003) argues that black South African parents send their children to ex-model C schools because of the ‘superior resourcing and academic preparation offered by the English-medium school’ (in Hornberger 2006, p.225). On the other hand, it can be argued that references such as ‘those’ and ‘our’ in Ms Bailey’s discourse serve to imply that white is of superior status, consistent with the discourse of apartheid, while black is somewhat inferior.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Drawing on the interview data with staff, this chapter has explored ‘the assemblage of meanings and [cultural] practices’ (Apple, 1990, p.5) that sustain the hegemony of English in this former-white institution. I have demonstrated that the learning experiences of multilingual children in year one of formal schooling is dominated by English, with Afrikaans and ‘a little bit’ of Zulu only to be introduced in Grade 4. I have argued that the discursive practices at the school served to position English as *the* cultural capital while constructing other languages in deficit terms. I have concluded that the privileging of English over everything else and the fact that it is positioned as natural and commonsensical represents highly assimilationist practices.

In the following chapter I explore actual classroom practices to show how the monolingual ideologies I have referred to in this chapter become realised and played out in everyday classroom activities and events. My intention is to demonstrate the extent to which dominant institutional discourses and ideologies influence the

communicative practices within classrooms to become the ‘objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1972). Furthermore, I aim to illustrate how these young black multilingual children take up and act on these hegemonic ideologies that mediate their everyday school life.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The (Re) production of Monolingual Ideologies and Ethos in Grade 1 Classrooms**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter I have looked at the hierarchy of languages as established within the school with a specific focus on Grade 1, the first year of formal education. Through my interview data with staff, I have demonstrated the institutional discourses and ideologies that legitimated the hegemony of English, while positioning other languages as unimportant. I have argued that the language policy document at Johannesburg primary plays a significant role in the reproduction of the dominant values, culture and ethos of the school. It is my contention that these questions of language policy and monoglot ideologies operating at JP are not simply about the medium through which teaching and learning is carried out, but involve crucial concerns about the relationship between English medium schooling, economic and job opportunities and the social class issues in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, there is also a question about the operation of power in post-apartheid education; specifically how a formerly white school like JP has continued to reproduce and maintain its historical linguistic order even when the learner population has changed to become predominantly black.

Chapter 5 concentrated on the macro or the institutional, that is, the cultural practices and ideologies characterising the identity of school. My main concern in this chapter will be to provide an analysis of the day-to-day school activities and events to demonstrate how those language discourses and monoglot ideologies I referred to in chapter 5 become manifested in the actual classroom and school practices. My analysis here will draw mainly on video-recorded, audio-recorded classroom data and field notes to show those salient classroom moments and activities mediating the construction of and the reproduction of monoglot ideologies that exist in Grade 1. It is important to realise that my analysis will not be limited to classroom activities; I will also make reference to activities outside the immediate classrooms where necessary. This chapter aims to outline the institutional processes and practices that support particular conceptions of English. In particular, I will explore those discursive practices through which the monolingual ethos becomes established in multilingual classrooms, and the specific ways in which learners are positioned by these discursive



practices in the school. As I have mentioned earlier, I use the term ‘discursive practices’ broadly to include discourses, concepts, meanings, images and representations that serve to produce and reproduce specific understandings about cultural and linguistic resources that typify this institution of school. I will also consider how monoglot ideologies contribute to the processes of inclusion and exclusion that are taking place in Grade 1 classrooms as a result of what language/knowledge resources are seen to count. In this way, I aim to sketch an account of how different discursive practices at JP, both implicit and explicit, can overlap and constitute each other. This is so because

the sorts of things that learners are encouraged to write [and are encouraged to speak, also], the discourse conventions they are taught to follow and the practices in which they are expected to engage within the educational system tend to reproduce the dominant values of the society supporting that educational system, and to reproduce existing class relations (Clark and Ivanic, 1997, p.121, my emphasis).

As I have aimed to demonstrate through all the previous chapters, through highly ideological practices and discourses, this school institution socialises and apprentices young black children into the culture and ethos that privilege English by making English and related activities appear as ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1972, 1977) or normal while at the same marginalising other representations of resources to make them appear unnatural and not having common sense (see Bloome *et al.*, 2005). I will further argue that the emphasis on linguistic homogeneity or uniformity characterising Grade 1 teaching and learning at this school serves to create and recreate inequalities in education. Although the Grade 1 classrooms I am referring to exhibit highly monolingual discursive practices, it is important to point out that learners do not merely take on those monoglot discourses and assimilate to the school’s cultural ethos. As I shall discuss in chapter 7, amid the strong monolingual ethos learners are nonetheless able to insert their multilingualism in ‘unpoliced zones’ (Stein, 2003a) such as among themselves or in classroom spaces when the teachers are not watching.

This chapter addresses key concerns about language legitimacy, and intersecting issues of power relations and identity positions. The chapter is divided into three sections. In section 6.2, I draw on thematic analysis and discourse analytic tools in the Foucauldian tradition (e.g. Gee, 1992, 1996; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Wortham, 2006) to illuminate specific conceptions of the English

knowledge/language and the extent to which they become realised in actual school practices. That is, I will focus on the general socialisation processes including language use, literacy events and learning activities and interpret the meanings in the light of how these are used to convey and reinforce the dominant cultural practices of the school. In addition, I will look at the Granny practice in particular, an important factor serving as a conduit that facilitates language values and norms. Section 6.3 will explore what particular forms of English are favoured, as well as which ways of representation are constructed as natural within this institutional community. That is, what kind of monolingual habitus (Bourdieu, 1977b, 1990a, 1991) or school identity is being produced and reproduced in Grade 1 classrooms and by what means? My conceptualisation of school identities, as I have discussed earlier, involves the embodiment of ‘appropriate’ ways of behaving, talking and ways with words that this school expects of learners as bona fide members of this community. Finally, in section 6.4, there is also a question of power relations that is immediately apparent in terms of what possibilities and limitations are offered by different identity positions? In other words, who is in and who is out?

## **6.2 The Construction of a Monolingual Ethos: ‘We have to use English...it is for their own good’**

As I have mentioned earlier, learners at Johannesburg Primary (JP) school speak many different languages. However, the overwhelming majority of social interactions in Grade 1 occur in just one language: English. Many of these children come with very limited proficiency in English on entering the school as this language is not part of their communicative repertoire at home. Because of the school’s language policy which seems to emphasise the exclusive use of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 1-3, these young multilingual children are expected to learn from English-based curriculum materials and to communicate mainly in English both in social and academic activities within the school. As shall become evident in chapter 7, when African languages are used, they are basically for ‘show’ or tokenistic displays rather than meaningful activities that contribute to the teaching and learning in Grade 1 classrooms. On the basis of my classroom data below, I shall argue that the positioning of English in actual practices and activities not only plays a key role in shaping processes of representation (i.e. ‘legitimate’ ways of talking, ways with words and ways of knowing) but also communicates messages about respective values of

other languages. Inevitably, this English dominated reality in the foundation phase of schooling engenders particular attitudes towards other languages, and eventually influences how learners themselves take on that English hegemony and act out that reality.

My data discussion in this section introduces some key themes about how the language English is constructed, characterised and talked about in the space of the school classroom. These themes: ‘we have to use English [because] we are an English medium school’; ‘some of them had no English at all [upon entering school]’; ‘it is important for our [black] children...to have [English] first language speakers at school’ and ‘children cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of [African languages]’ are critical if we are to understand how English is actually situated and projected as reality in multilingual classrooms. I begin with a remark from Ms Bailey, followed by an instance involving English volunteers, to demonstrate that the superior status that English is made to assume is carried out through a range of behaviours including language use, instructional processes and lesson content, and pedagogical approaches. As a result, all these institutional discourses and practices are inextricably linked contributing to the realisation of the monolingual culture and ethos of the school. Commenting on her own teaching practices, specifically the main use of English in year one, Ms Bailey says that:

**Extract 25: ‘Some of them had no English...they learn quickly’**

We have to use English with them most of the time. It is for their own good...you know what I mean... [because] we are an English medium school. They have really made huge leaps...at the beginning [of the year] some of them had no English at all...And children are like sponges you know, they learn quickly. I’m very proud of them. (Field notes: 10 Oct, GR1B)

It is important to point out that this conversation happened during normal school hours in Ms Bailey’s classroom when she explained to me why it is vital for these children to have intensive exposure to the dominant language. What is particularly evident here is the extent to which the dominance of English is fostered, and perhaps even defended: ‘we have to use English with them [i.e. learners] most of the time’ because ‘we are an English medium school’. Conceptualisations such as ‘[learning English] is for their own good’ immediately establishes that language plays a key role in the process of representation and in creating subject positions in school. The fact

that English is constructed as something that will benefit learners' school careers captures the power and worth it commands explicitly, meaning that if learners are to have any hope of doing well or success in terms of literacy learning they had little choice but to learn English.

This understanding that using English most of the time as Ms Bailey puts it, accompanied by the neglect of learners' own languages, will assist these learners in their studies presumably to help them make huge leaps also serves to characterise the extent to which school classrooms shape particular traditions and visions of the world. By locating English as the most important form of knowledge, and omitting that knowledge they believe is of lesser importance, the school practices restrict learners to visions of reality that 'English is effectively *the* only game in town or that it should be the only game in town' (Block, 2008, my emphasis). In this way then, these children are expected to adopt and adapt to the language ethos of the school regardless of who they are as is apparent here: 'we have to use English [because] we are an English medium school'. This highly monolingual approach of learning is justified and presented as something to benefit learners' educational welfare. However, I argue the contrary to say that such a practice is mainly aimed at establishing parameters for what is to be regarded as acceptable knowledge representations (and not) in the classroom, ultimately justifying distinctions amongst learners.

The most telling evidence about these processes of homogenisation within Grade 1 school classrooms can be seen here when Ms Bailey proclaims that 'at the beginning [of the year] some of [these learners] had no English at all' but because 'children are like sponges...they learn quickly' and as a result 'they have made really huge leaps'. The fact these children's literacy abilities are equated to having English or not having English is interesting, given the range of multilingual repertoires at the school. However, what is significant is how English gets positioned as the only resource that they deem to be worth transmitting to learners. Obviously this sends messages to all about the respective values associated with different languages in this learning space, and eventually shapes learners' view of the world about them. For instance, pronouncements such as 'they are like sponges'; 'they learn quickly'; and 'it's for their own good' further demonstrate that a particular interpretive framework is supported, facilitating the realisation of English as the only way of 'doing school,

doing lesson, doing learning' (see Bloome *et al.*, 2005). The mere fact that these young children are likened to sponges supports my argument that the activities here all work in such a way as to reinforce and re-create the dominant culture and ethos without appearing to be coercive. This perhaps explains Ms Bailey's bold utterance that 'I am very proud of them' suggesting that the rigorous favouring of English tends to accelerate the acquisition of a monolingual habitus that is being perpetuated as the naturalised way of knowing.

The following extracts also illustrate instances in the classroom when children are made to believe that English is simply 'the way things are' (Cameron, 2001). Extract 26 below is taken from Mrs Zondo's classroom, and it represents one of the common moments in Grade 1 when volunteers, or Grannies as they are popularly known, came by to collect those learners that teachers recommend for additional English lessons and support.

**Extract 26: 'Her English is not there yet'**

Mrs Zondo:...Sadie Granny Martha is here. Take out your spelling book and the worksheet we did yesterday. We are doing the s-sounds this week. Granny Martha will help your sounds...hurry up Sadie...her English is not there yet. She is still struggling...[ADDRESSING GRANNY MARTHA].

Granny Martha: Bring your story book too my girl.

Sadie: This one [SHOWING A BOOK]

Granny Martha: No not that one. Bring Handstand [TITLE OF THE STORYBOOK]

Mrs Zondo: When Sadie comes back you go Ntokozo. Get your spelling book and worksheet ready. [ADDRESSING THE CLASS] Take out your library books and I want to see you in a straight line. No talking Grade 1...if you keep making noise you are all going to stay here with me and no one is going to the media centre...

[Video recording: Wed 26 Oct, GR1Z]

As part of the classroom socialisation practices, I have observed that both Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo are often on the look-out for those learners who displayed difficulty in English. Both teachers seem adept at identifying problems and particular children are often sent for extra sessions conducted by white volunteers. The sessions are either on a one-to-one basis or small group discussions with a specific focus on their English communication. These sessions take place during normal school hours aiming to address a number of English language and literacy problems that the teachers have diagnosed. It appears that some learners are attending extra classes on an almost regular basis, while others with occasional problems are sent for extra classes not so often.

In extract 26 Mrs Zondo's gives instructions to Granny Martha regarding the specific language aspects that Sadie needs help with, that is, the s-sounds and perhaps even spelling. This extract raises one crucial concern in this thesis: What kind of role do volunteers play in the monolingual project of the school? It is important to realise that the volunteers in these Grade 1 classrooms are senior citizens who visited the school regularly. All the volunteers are white females, some of whom are retired teachers themselves (see chapter 3). More importantly, they are English first language speakers, and therefore monolingual. The fact that the Grannies providing language support in a diverse context like this one are monolingual is interesting showing ways in which the hegemony of English is supported through a mechanism of surveillance and of the policing of learners' language behaviour (Foucault, 1977, 1980). Not only are multilingual children provided with English first language speakers as role models, but they are also socialised to think that lack of or limited access to English literacy is something 'bad', perhaps because it departs from the school norm. The fact that Sadie is positioned as someone who is 'still struggling', and whose 'English is still not there' mirrors the social and linguistic conventions that accompany this situation in terms of the limitations and possibilities of differential access to English for children's identities. Undoubtedly, the idea of sending children for extra classes so that they can engage with appropriate language models not only signals what knowledge is worth knowing, but also implies that those whose language departs from accepted standards, who are deviants, will be normalised as an integral part of the cultural ways of doing things. It is my contention that this process of normalisation serves as a mechanism to compare and differentiate learners according to where they stand in relation to the power-knowledge, in Foucault's terms (1972). In this way then the children who are able to display their competence in English will inherit the power associated with it while those, like Sadie, whose 'English is not there yet' will not reap the benefits of such power.

The point I wish to advance here is that the status of English as the only language that counts, and the various discourses associated with its current dominant position at JP, together play a role in mediating and shaping the kinds of identity positions that are ascribed to learners. In that way, the different identity positions that are made available to learners had implications for unequal power relations that existed in Grade 1 classrooms. Clearly, classroom practices such as the volunteer system that

involves the identifying of and dealing with ‘problem learners’ work to attribute immense value to English as a resource as well as advantage those individual learners who are perceived to possess this commodity. For instance, through descriptions and labels such as ‘[s/he] has no language [i.e. English] at all’ ‘she is still struggling [with English]’, ‘her English is not there yet’ teachers are using English (as a benchmark) in a fairly obvious way to differentially assign worth to linguistic expressions. From this perspective then, I shall argue that the language discourses and associated practices within Grade 1 classrooms do not only shape learners’ identities but also position them in ways that may have an effect on their opportunities to participate in classroom activities. It is important to realise that while English is privileged, some forms are more valued than others as it shall become evident in the next section.

The issue of white English first language speakers as volunteers and their status within school cannot be looked at as an isolated aspect but part and parcel of the culture. I see their presence as a contributing factor to the broader processes of homogenisation or linguistic uniformity that takes place here. This concurs with Pennycook’s (1989, p. 33) claim that the ‘institutional practices that people draw upon...often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations. Practices can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become naturalized’. In the following extract I further explore the specific kinds of roles played by Grannies or volunteers in constituting a sense of reality that sustains hegemonic ideologies.

Extract 27 below summarises Ms Bailey’s attitudes and views about the assistance that they receive from English first language speakers. This comment came about when I asked her about the role of senior citizens in the school as some children who are seen to have difficulties in English during classroom activities are sent off for extra sessions.

**Extract 27: ‘[English] first language speakers...help our children...get accustomed to English’**

it is important for our [black] children to have grannies [i.e. white volunteers] coming to our school...to have [English] first language speakers at the school...that helps our children a lot...they can get accustomed to the English sounds and pronunciation. Some of the grannies were teachers so they understand the children. And the children enjoy working with them. [reconstructed from field notes: Tues 1 Nov, Gr1B].

This example captures the crux of assumptions, values and conventions which support, or at least do not contradict, the hegemonic influences. For Ms Bailey these volunteers play an important role as language models that black children can emulate and follow. She points out that they ‘help...children a lot [particularly] to get accustomed to the English sounds and pronunciation’. Mrs Zondo makes a similar point about why it is crucial to have the assistance of English first language speakers, mentioning that African languages, which are first languages to most of these children, interfere with the effective learning of English. Moreover, Mrs Zondo states that African languages influence the manner in which children pronounce things ( see extract 41 in chapter 7) The issue of African languages being constructed as somehow ‘harmful’ to the acquisition of the English illuminates the kinds of dispositions or habitus as in Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b, 1990a, 1991) being nurtured here. In addition, what specific type of English are children apprenticed into? Considering Ms Bailey and Mrs Zondo’s remarks it is clear that while communication in English is generally favoured, the variety preferred should reflect proficiency in ‘English sounds and pronunciation’ and perhaps with no traces of ‘African language influence’. In section 6.3 below I elaborate on this issue of the forms of English, particularly which ones are encouraged and expected in the classroom.

### **6.3 Performing School Identities: ‘Carbon dioxide...that’s a big English word’**

Building on the previous section about the attitudes that favour English monolingual practices, here I focus on the relationship between English as a valued resource, the formation of particular subjects or school identities and power relations. That is, what specific varieties of English are perpetuated to be legitimate, and have currency, within this institutional arrangement? In addition, what are the (identity) implications for being able to or being unable to perform English? I will draw on Bourdieu’s (1977b, 1986, 1991) conceptualisation of linguistic market and capital to capture the role of school classrooms in the attribution of worth to different forms of English. I will argue that institutional contexts are similar to markets in which some linguistic products are valued more highly than others. Those who understand the norms of language and are able to produce the right expressions become advantaged and as a result profit from this particular linguistic market, whereas those who appear to lack such expressions are limited to positions that are disadvantaged.



The extract below represents one of the news-time activities in Ms Bailey's class during which learners are expected to report on the backgrounds of their names, including things like specific meanings and the significance of their names. It is important to realise that news-time activities are factored into the timetable for Monday and Friday mornings, and both Grade 1 teachers are flexible, employing it as often as they deem it is necessary. This is so because teachers believe that it helps to develop and improve learners' communication skills, and subsequently their literacy. I am present throughout this lesson and so is the teacher assistant, Mrs Mokwena. Her official role in the school is supposedly to interpret and translate materials into languages other than English when and where children experienced difficulties. However, I will illustrate in chapter 7 that her interactions with children are mainly done through the medium of English.

**Extract 28: 'I'll be listening to how you are speaking and...talking [in English]'**

Ms B :...(ADDRESSING THE WHOLE CLASS) OK. Everyone come sit here on the carpet. Right. Stretch. Back straight. (INSTRUCTING THE CLASS TO BE ATTENTIVE).Today you are going to tell me a little bit of news...I'll be listening to how you are speaking and how you are talking...and to the news that you want to tell us because (inaudible) sometimes we found that children are ready to speak their English much much better. Now think...First, there are children who want to be number 1 (IN RESPONDING) and they put up their hands and we don't hear anything... Simon, you will look this way, Tshepo you will look this way (TO FACE THE TEACHER). Right. If anyone else found out about their name, that's something we have to find out. We have very few children sharing with us about their names and why their mummy and daddy or family chose that name for them. It may be very important. Anyone else got to share something about their name?...Remember, when you are telling your news your voice should come up and up (WITH EMPHASIS)...

Lucky: I asked my mother (MS B INTERRUPTS)

Ms B: No I can't hear you. Look at me...face me when you are speaking...

[Video recording: Mon 21 Nov, GR1B]

In this extract Ms Bailey's begins her lesson situating speech and talk as important learning and communication skills. While the aim of this activity is to facilitate oral communication by providing learners opportunities to engage in discussion significant emphasis is placed on English, the language of teaching and learning (LoLT), as can be evidenced in Ms Bailey's instructions: 'Today you are going to tell me a little bit of news...I'll be listening to how you are speaking and how you are talking...because...sometimes we found that children are ready to speak their English much much better'. There is an explicit suggestion here that speaking and talking are central to the acquisition of English. In addition, practicing and interacting in English

is conceptualised as one of the ways to learn and improve English. The teacher's claim that such oral skills contribute to language learning and language development is valid. However, the news-time exercise above seems to be more about making out which learners are 'ready to speak...English much much better', and which ones are experiencing difficulties in this language. In other words, this classroom lesson is aimed at evaluating and identifying those who are in and those who out in relation to spoken English. Statements such as 'I'll be listening to how you are speaking and how you are talking [in English]' imply that a particular performance of English is favoured, presumably a proficient way of talking and speaking in English rather than incompetence or a faltering performance. For instance, in extract 29 below I will further explore the different forms of English that are privileged in teaching and learning moments, and the linguistic worth that these forms command. There is also an implicit meaning in extract 28 that the ability to appropriate the linguistic products that are offered in this linguistic market will give learners (who have access to them) legitimacy, and perhaps even authority, to participate in particular activities and to claim certain identity positions.

As in the case of the extract above, this classroom lesson is based on specific (news) topics and themes that children introduce in the class. Ms Bailey invites learners to talk about any topic of interest and their experiences as a way of opening up discussion in English.

**Extract 29: 'recycle...that's a big word'**

Ms Bailey: ...does anyone have some interesting news to tell us this morning...anything...maybe you went to church over the weekend, or you went on a trip, or you were home with your family, or you watched something interesting on the TV...

Tony: Mam in the morning when we were coming to school we found a paper bag with (.) full of potato peels.

Ms Bailey:...Mm well where did you find that?

Tony: We found it around the corner as we were walking to school...

Ms B: Where do you think it came from?

Tony: It came from...I don't know mam.

Ms B: Do you think it's a good thing to find?...Where should things like that go?

David: In the garbage.

Ms B: In the garbage, yes... There is a place for everything...paper, what do we do with our paper...it is very important?

Lynda: We write on it.

Ms B: No, that's not what I want...when we have finished using it...like newspapers when you have finished reading them what do we do with those newspapers (CHILDREN SHOUTING).

Ms B: No! no! Don't shout, if you want to say something just put up your hand and I'll give you a chance...

Mary: We recycle it.

Ms B: We recycle it. That's a big word...very good my girl...who knows what a recycling sign is, on a tin of coke, maybe or a cardboard box?

Steven: It's an arrow with a circle...

Ms B: Very good. He has been looking at it. If you see a circle with that one arrow going this way and going around this circle (DEMONSTRATING) because that is what recycling means. What do you think they do with all that stuff in the orange bin because sometimes it is full and sometimes it is empty? What have they done with it? Come. Sarah...what do you think they have done with it?

Sarah: They have emptied it.

Ms B: They have emptied it but they don't just empty it into a big field. What do they do with it? Come. Think of what recycling means.

David: They do other papers.

Ms B: Yes they are making it into papers that you can use again. So, they wet it maybe and then they squeeze it and they make it into like (.) it looks like eh...

[Video recording: Mon 21 Nov, GR1B]

This classroom interaction demonstrates the intricate link between the forms of English that count and those that do not count, and the relations of power in this linguistic market. Tony, one of the learners, begins the discussion by relating his experiences that morning: 'mam in the morning when we were coming to school we found a paper bag with (.) full of potato peels'. The teacher draws on Tony's contribution to create opportunities for language and literacy learning during this class period. For instance, the teacher uses Tony's idea of 'a paper bag...full of potato peels' and 'garbage' according to David as a metalanguage to talk about the process of recycling 'where should things like that [i.e. potato peels] go?...there is a place for everything...paper, what do we do with our paper?...it is very important'. And later in the lesson she develops this notion of recycling to discuss the significance and importance of conserving trees in society as it can be seen in extract 30: 'yes all paper and cardboard and wood come from trees...we use lots of paper in this class. You can imagine all the classrooms in the whole of South Africa use paper from trees. So, if we can use things again it means we must try to save some trees...we should try not to cut down so many trees. Why?' It is clear that Ms Bailey makes interesting, and often complex, connections between children's own experiences and school knowledge to support learning, and consequently language and literacy development.

What is particularly important though is how Ms Bailey uses Tony's experiences in such a (strategic) way to endorse language/knowledge products that the market

favours as cultural capital, while marginalising expressions that are considered 'inappropriate'. Although Ms Bailey discusses this concept of recycling, she also seems preoccupied with the idea of standard English as a model of quality or excellence, and against which all forms of language expressions are measured. It is clear throughout this extract, as well as extract 30 below, that correct grammar, vocabulary, register and terminology is explicitly advocated. For instance, if we look at Lynda's response that 'we write on it' to Ms Bailey's questions 'where should things like [potato peels] go?...[and]...'what do we do with our paper?' illustrates that a certain level of sophistication in English is required in order to understand the situated meaning, or to provide an appropriate register.

In contrast, Mary is able to provide the proper terminology 'we recycle it' capturing the process of reusing paper that Ms Bailey is trying to illustrate. What is interesting, however, is the momentum with which the teacher endorses Mary's contribution: 'we recycle it. That's a big word...very good my girl...who knows what a recycling sign is, on a tin of coke...or a cardboard box?'. We get the impression here that sophisticated 'big words' like recycling are perceived as linguistic capital. Hence the teacher draws the whole class to this 'that's a big [i.e. English] word', perhaps as a way of modelling 'good' academic and language practices. It is through activities like this one that value English over other languages that the ideas about standard and non-standard varieties of English are propagated. Hence I argue that because markets (or school classrooms) generally favour English, they also adjudicate ways in which it should be spoken and presented. Hence the dominant discourse of schooling here anchors very distinct ways of 'doing school', ways of 'being at school', and 'ways with words' which Gee (2003) summarises as 'ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, knowing, and using various objects and technologies that constitute the social practice' (2003, p.15).

Extract 30 highlights one of the central questions in this thesis about the relationship between English and identity. While my discussion here focuses on the varieties of English that are validated, I will also demonstrate that the manner in which learners use English determines their mobility and identity status within the school. It is important to realise that this extract follows on from extract 29 above. Ms Bailey develops the notion of recycling further.

**Extract 30: ‘Carbon dioxide...now that’s a big English word’**

Ms Bailey: ...Yes all paper and cardboard and wood come from trees. So, we use lots of paper in this class. You can imagine all the classrooms in the whole of South Africa use paper from trees. So, if we can use things again it means we must try to save some trees...we should try not to cut down so many trees. Why? Especially in the garden...what do the trees in the garden do for you? Come children, please listen and try to think (.) the same children are awake. And some children are still on the weekend, Tshepo are you?

Tshepo: (SHAKES HIS HEAD TO SAY NO)

Ms B: I think so

David: It helps if it is hot (.) very hot, it makes shade.

T: Good. It makes shade for people, for animals, for birds, for whomever. What else?

Grace: Sometimes if we don’t have fruit and we have a tree fruit (Ms B INTERRUPTS)

Ms B: a fruit tree.

Grace: A fruit tree...you can have fruits

Ms B: Yes if you are lucky to have fruit trees you can have fruits...(SOMEONE MENTIONS VEGETABLES) No vegetables. No vegetables grow from trees. It grows on top of the ground or in the ground?

Tony: Also birds keep their nests there.

Ms B: Yes it’s a place for birds and even some insects can live in trees.

Collins: And they give us carbon dioxide.

Ms B: Very good. Now that’s a big English word. Come and stand here (IN FRONT OF THE CLASS) my boy and tell the rest of the class what you have just said...Do you know how that works? (COLLINS SHAKES HIS HEAD TO INDICATE THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW THE ANSWER) OK. The leaves breathe. Leaves can breathe and then they breathe in some of the air we breathe out and they breathe out...Understand? But the air that we need, they breathe out. So, they are helping us. Also if you have lots and lots of trees like in the forest, they can help with rain... right. Who can tell me something very interesting that has happened to you over the weekend?

[Video recording: Mon 21 Nov, GR1B]

In this extract Ms Bailey develops the idea of recycling mentioned earlier to introduce and discuss the topic of conservation of trees. As in the previous extract, the teacher draws on out of school experiences in a very interesting way to facilitate academic learning. This said, what is significant during this classroom discussion is Collins’ contribution. In responding to the teacher’s question: ‘what do trees in the garden do for you?’ Collins mentions that it is important to conserve trees because they ‘give us carbon dioxide’. Ms Bailey congratulates him ‘very good. Now that’s a big English word’. The mere fact that Ms Bailey alerts the class to this ‘big English word’ and instructs Collins to ‘come and stand [in front of the class]...and tell the rest of the class what you have just said’ shows the kind of prominence that is given to proficiency in English, as well as the kind of opportunities that are made available for children like Collins to perform English as expected. Evidently, the invitation to Collins to repeat this big English word ‘carbon dioxide’ to the class serves to

legitimate this way of expressing oneself as a model of 'excellence'. As a result, Collins is positioned favourably, as someone with an ability to produce the right kind of English vocabulary and expressions in this linguistic market. This 'prized' identity status puts Collins among the favoured in the school. For instance, I observed during my research that Collins was one of the two Grade 1 learners chosen to represent the Grade 1 community in a quiz competition<sup>32</sup> organised by the school. Hence I argue that by virtue of his positioning in this educational setting Collins will enjoy the advantages, value and power that accompanies such linguistic practices. The fact that Ms Bailey keeps drawing attention to this notion of 'big words' gives the impression that these expressions are considerably complex, and perhaps not the kind of terms easily accessible to these multilingual learners. Then, this begs the question – to what extent does access to or lack of access to oral skills such as 'big English words' impact on learners' opportunities?

The issue of English, an unequally distributed resource in multilingual classrooms, and identity bring in a complex dynamic about power relations. It is interesting to note how children like Mary and Collins who produce the right English at the right time for this market: 'recycle...that's a big word...very good my girl' and 'carbon dioxide...now that's a big English word...very good...come and stand here [and] tell the rest of the class what you have just told me' (extract 29 and 30 respectively); are positioned as good learners and role models whose behaviour should be replicated. The fact that Collins is asked to come and stand in front whole class to perform this school identity, which involves exhibiting and displaying his English knowledge, goes to differentiate between linguistic products that count and have power, and those that do not count. Also, Collins' identity performance here stands to signify and distinguish legitimate behaviour from pathological or unacceptable ones. The case of Mary and Collins support my argument in this thesis that the dominant school practices assimilate children into the idea that certain English language forms, such as standard varieties and register specific terms, are superior. And those who display these privileged linguistic conventions, styles and meanings become advantaged. By perpetuating the ideological notions that English is everything, the school practices

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<sup>32</sup> The Quiz competition took place in the school hall during normal school hours. Each classroom was represented by learners that teachers had chosen. During this activity, the participants are seated at the front stage of the hall, in full view of the whole school, and are expected to respond to the questions asked. The questions are mainly based on general knowledge.

not only develop particular orientations to language but also create and recreate social difference and social inequality. This is line with Heller's (2008, p.50) view that education is a discursive space where 'symbolic and material resources are constituted as valued resources, whose regulation serves as a site of production and reproduction of relations of power which...are more likely to take the form of practices of symbolic domination'.

Like in the previous examples, extract 31 below also demonstrates how multilingual children get positioned differentially in a system of unequal distribution of resources, shaping particular understandings of that system and their place in that system. In this lesson Ms Bailey pays attention to English grammar, specifically sentence and tense construction.

**Extract 31: 'look at me when you are talking'**

Ms Bailey:...let's have some waking up...I gave you homework yesterday and asked you to write three sentences. I want to see those sentences...excuse me!  
(ADDRESSING A LATE COMER)

Patrick: Sorry I am late mam.

Ms B: Why are you so late?

Patrick: Because the bus was stuck. There was a traffic.

Ms B: There was traffic and the bus got stuck?

Patrick: Yes [Ms B interrupting: Look at me when you are talking Patrick]

Ms B: And tuck in your shirt and repeat after me 'there was traffic and the bus got stuck' (PATRICK DOES AS TOLD AND JOINS THE REST OF THE CLASS ON THE CARPET) Okay...Thabang read out your sentences...

Thabang: I play with my friends. The dog is sick. I eat my breakfast.

Ms B:...Well done my boy...I want someone to come and write 'I play with my friends' on the chalkboard...

[Video recording: Friday 2 Dec, GR1B]

As in the previous extracts, the interaction between Ms Bailey and her class here is aimed at shaping the monolingual habitus or a school identity. What is significant, however, is the extent to which learners like Patrick who fail to perform English at the appropriate level become positioned within the dominant discourses of the classroom. For instance, Patrick is late and Ms Bailey attempts to elicit information on why that is so. In his response Patrick says that he is late 'because the bus was stuck. There was a traffic'. Upon hearing this, Ms Bailey immediately attends to the situation to correct Patrick's sentence construction 'there was traffic and the bus got stuck?'. Unlike in extract 29 and 30 where the focus is on register specific language, in this extract the teacher is concerned with form. What is similar in all these extracts is that meaning is

sacrificed. While the teacher revises Patrick's sentence and instructs him to replicate what she has said: '...repeat after me 'there was traffic and the bus got stuck' there is no explanation why that information has to be organised in that manner. This emphasis on form, it can be argued, highlights how the teaching of English to multilingual children is approached and what features of English are emphasised. Although not a particular interest in this thesis, the issue of the appropriate demeanour and eye gaze direction arises here. The teacher's utterance: 'Look at me when you are talking...tuck in your shirt', accompanying the performance of English demonstrates that determining nature of classrooms practices – that children cannot simply say and do anything, rather they find themselves in a 'space' that is already organised for them (Ryan, 1999). Of interest though is how Patrick is 'hail[ed]...into the place as the social subjects of particular discourses' (Hall, 2000, p.19). Because of his poor sentence structure Patrick is constructed as someone who requires normalisation because his language behaviour appears to depart from the dominant culture. This behaviour obviously does not put him in the category of the favoured in this market place.

This focus on sentence structure here, together with the English concepts in previous extracts, provides a picture about the level of emphasis placed on English grammar and language rules. For instance, extract 29, 30 and 31 all illustrate the extent to which classroom activities are mainly devoted to various grammatical features such as phonics, tenses, sentence construction. Considering the teachers' earlier comments that the grannies help children 'get accustomed to the English sounds and pronunciation' (as in extract 27) and that children 'cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of African languages' (extract 38); it appears that they believe that such an intensive attention to English grammar is justified because children are perceived to have a poor hold on grammar. This emphasis on grammar is clearly seen as an important element in the acquisition of English, particularly the standard variety of English that is considered appropriate for learning and communication. While teachers' pedagogic approaches are well-intended, aiming to give learners access to English, this pervasive monolingual view and the type of discourses that support it only perpetuate what Phillipson (1992, p.185) has referred to as the 'monolingual fallacy'. This means that English is best taught monolingually with no other language used in the classroom as it may interfere with learning English.



#### **6.4 Who is in and who is out? ‘You said it very well...well done my girl’**

In the previous section I have looked at the types of English that are privileged and presented as commonsensical. Here I address the key question – how do learners negotiate, take up and act on subject positions made available in different school discourses? Linked to this I explore the processes of rewarding that permeate classroom activities. That is, who is being rewarded and who is not. My main aim is to show that the practice of rewarding or offering prizes for certain linguistic performance serves to include and exclude learners. Because the issue of positioning is central to my discussion it is crucial to recall that my conceptualisation of identity draws on the understanding that school identity is formed within and through discursive practices, following for example Foucault (1972), Walkerdine (1997) and Toohey (2000). However, identities are not static but are rather complex, conflictual and dynamic, as I have discussed earlier in chapter 4. From this point of view, I have drawn on scholars such as Blommaert (2005) and Butler (1990, 1997) to argue that by taking up subject positions within discourse learners actually perform different identities across space and time.

The following extract 32 is taken from Mrs Zondo’s class in which she asks learners to share some of their experiences. During this interaction one of the learners mentions the issue of bullies and Mrs Zondo uses this as a topic for discussion throughout this class period.

##### **Extract 32: ‘You said it very well...well done my girl’**

Mrs Zondo: Good morning Grade 1Z.

Class: Good morning Mrs Zondo. How are you today? God bless you.

Mrs Z: I am fine thank you. I like it when you say ‘God bless you’. Did you have a nice weekend?

Class: Yes mam (NOISY. SOME HAVE THEIR HANDS UP TO INDICATE THAT THEY WANT TO SAY SOMETHING)

Mrs Z: I did not say you should make noise...I have two ears... (PROMPT)

Class: I have two ears to hear the truth. I have two eyes to see the good. I have two feet to carry me to places where I want to be and I try to use them wisely and I thank Heavenly Father for making me this way.

Mrs Z: Clap your hands 10 times (CLASS CLAPPING). Louder. Again. Put them on your laps. Now let’s listen to Nhlanhla...

Nhlanhla: I had a very nice weekend mam. I went to church at Sunday...(Mrs Z interrupts: say on Sunday or yesterday) I went to church yesterday and they told me a nice thing that children should not hit others. They should not be bullies.

Mrs Z: That is very good Nhlanhla. Bullies are not nice people. What is a bully?

Learner (boy): A child who fights others.

Lynette: It's a child who do not play nicely with other children...(Mrs Z interrupts: It's a child who *does* (WITH EMPHASIS) not play nicely with other children. We say 'does', do hear me. Say 'does'. Who can sound 'does' for me?

Ashley: D-o-e-s.

Mrs Z: Well done Ashley. Now...if a Grade 7 hits a Grade 1 that Grade 7 is a bully because a Grade 1 is small...(A FEW HANDS UP)

Ashley: If you are a bully you will not have friends.

Mrs Z: That's good Ashley. Repeat that for us Ashley. You said it very well. Well done my girl. She said something very important. What do we say to Ashley?

Class: Thank you. Very Much. Keep it up. Shine. (SINGING TO CONGRATULATE ASHLEY)

Mrs Z: If you are a bully you will not have friends. Who does not want to have friends? Who will play with you if you do not have friends?

Charles: Mam my brother was hit by a bully.

Mrs Z: How old is your brother?

Charles: 21 years

Mrs Z: You see, adults can be bullies as well. Bullies are not very nice people...

[Video recording: Mon 28 Nov, GR1Z]

In this news-time lesson, Mrs Zondo engages her class in interesting moral activities on the general topic 'what is a bully?' during which she points out to this group of young learners that 'bullies are not very nice people [and] adults can be bullies as well'. The class seem to enjoy this topic yielding a lot of discussion about things like a bully is 'a child who fights others' and that 'if you are a bully you will not have friends'. Interestingly, unlike in extracts 29-31, there is focus on both form and meaning. The significance of this conversation interaction is captured by those moments when the teacher makes linguistic interventions in Nhlanhla and Lynette's case. For instance, in relating his church experiences to the class Nhlanhla employs a wrong proposition 'I had a very nice weekend mam. I went to church at Sunday'. Mrs Zondo quickly interrupts to correct him: 'say on Sunday or yesterday'. In the same way, when Lynette responds to the question about what a bully is she says: 'it's a child who do not play nicely with other children'. As in Nhlanhla's situation, the teacher instantaneously remarks 'it's a child who *does* (WITH EMPHASIS) not play nicely with others' signalling that her verb tense is incorrect. The teacher makes a further comment: We say '*does*'; and invites Lynette to repeat after her: 'say '*does*'. The teacher then turns to the class using this example to introduce phonics: 'Who can sound '*does*' for me?'. As I have mentioned before, there is a lot of attention to phonics in Grade 1 classrooms. Nhlanhla and Lynette's situation sheds light on the extent of English language drilling and modelling that happens as a way to normalise learners' communication behaviours. This suggests that proficiency in standard English has implications for social mobility within the academic ranks of the school,

that is, whether they are in or out. An important concern though is how children who experience language difficulties appear to be limited only to those subject positions that do not come with any rewards, as compared to Ashley's case that I shall discuss next. The fact that Nhlanhla and Lynette's contribution is not affirmed in any way shows that they are not counted among the favoured and as such obscured from view.

Ashley's contribution in this lesson: 'If you are a bully you will not have friends' introduces an interesting dynamic of legitimate school identity; particularly the institutional rewards that become bestowed on those individuals who perform English in line with the school's standards. Unlike Nhlanhla and Lynette, Ashley's competence in displaying English as a valued commodity clearly advantaged her making it possible for her to claim the 'prized' identity position in the class. For instance, Ashley's sentence and tense construction and content are considered to be appropriate. Hence it is not necessary for the teacher to interject. Because Ashley is in a position to play out this school identity of performing English, effectively producing and reproducing the norms in this school, we see Mrs Zondo endorsing and validating her performance: 'that's good Ashley. Repeat that for us Ashley. You said it very well. Well done my girl'. Moreover, the class is instructed to sing and clap as way of congratulating her: 'what do we say to Ashley?'. And as part of the culture of the classroom, the whole class sings to affirm their colleague's achievement: 'Thank you. Very Much. Keep it up. Shine'. Interestingly, not only is this 'good student' subject position constructed as something to be celebrated, but it also acts a model of excellence or good practice to which the rest of the class is expected to conform to and attain as members of this community. It is my understanding that Ashley's ability to perform English here symbolises an embodiment of the monolingual habitus and the monolingual ethos of the school. Thus, her language behaviour is affirmed and rewarded as a cultural capital, rather than disqualified (as in Blommaert *et al.*, 2006) as something invaluable. I shall argue that evaluating and ranking children differently as either good learners or somehow mediocre, failing to come up to scratch, indexes power relations, and also serves to advantage and marginalise them, as I discuss in the extract below.

Extract 33 further addresses the question of symbolic rewards and the relations of power. In particular, I demonstrate what kind of social relations are constructed

through institutional discourses and practices that affirm and deny learners' language behaviour. This example represents one of the activities in Mrs Zondo's class when phonics featured prominently.

**Extract 33: 'Clever boy...come and get yourself a star'**

Mrs Zondo:.. Now I have a hard one for you. I want you to listen to the 1<sup>st</sup> and the last sound. The word is hippopotamus. Ndumiso what did you hear?

Ndumiso: 'H' at the beginning and 'S' at the end.

Mrs Z: Very good. He was listening to me. Now let's give him a clap.

Class: Thank you. Very much. Keep it up. Shine. (CLASS SINGING AND CLAPPING)

Mrs Z: Clever boy...Come and get yourself a star (THE TEACHER MAKES A SYMBOLIC STAR ON HIS FOREHEAD TO CONGRATULATE HIM) Who was going to say that? (ALMOST EVERYONE'S HAND IS UP) Good you are clever cats. The next one is 'duck'. Karabo what did you hear?

Karabo: 'D' at the beginning and kicking king (METAPHORIC REFERENCE TO THE LETTER 'K') at the end. He is at the end so that he doesn't kick anyone.

Mrs Z: Yes. Good boy...

[Field notes: Tues 22 Nov, GR1Z]

In this extract Mrs Zondo is conducting a lesson focussing on a variety of English sound combinations. The teacher calls out words and children are expected to identify the different sounds. The teacher draws learners' attention to this fact: 'now I have a [difficult word] for you. I want you to listen to the first and the last sound. The word is hippopotamus'. Ndumiso, perhaps to the teacher surprise, gets this one right: 'H and the beginning and S at the end'. Like in Ashley's situation in extract 33, Ndumiso ability to decipher such a 'hard [word]' as the teacher puts it, receives compliments. The teacher positions him as both a good and an attentive learner 'Very good. He was listening to me'. The rest of the class is instructed to join in this celebration and sing for him: 'Now let's give him a clap'. What remains particularly interesting is the teacher's invitation to Ndumiso to the front of the class so that he can be rewarded in full view of everyone: 'Clever boy. Come and get yourself a star'. Although the teacher appears to just make a symbolic star<sup>33</sup> on his forehead as a way to say 'well done', I argue that such practices created boundaries between who counts and who does not. A case in point here is how children like Ndumiso are able to play the game in this linguistic market to earn themselves highly prized positions, as well as inherit the power that accompanies such status, whereas children who are unable to do so remain at the periphery.

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<sup>33</sup> The teacher just placed her fingers on his forehead making crosses to symbolise a star shape.

The extract below represents one of the classroom interactions in Ms Bailey's class just before the end of the school year. Although this conversation is not particularly on English, it is illuminating because it gives us a sense of the kinds of cultural understandings and attitudes that these children have acquired in their first year of learning in a former white school. I will pay attention to the issue of rewards or prizes that is so apparent here. My main aim is to demonstrate how these multilingual children reproduce some of the dominant discourses of the school in their talk.

**Extract 34: What happens if you do your school work?...You'll get a certificate'**

Ms B: Today is the last Monday of the whole school year. Tshwarelo what do you want to say?

Tshwarelo: The school is closing...It's Christmas.

Learner (boy): We will be on holiday next week.

Ms B: Today you are going to tell me something special about this year...something special about your year in Grade 1. Think before I ask you. Everyone is going to tell me something. (LEARNERS ARE SEATED ON THE CARPET)

Lebo: Yesterday I went with my mother to town... (MS B INTERRUPTS)

Ms B: No I said something about Grade 1.

Kgomotso: My mom said if I go to Grade 2 she'll buy you a present.

Ms B: Well I don't know about that...I will not answer you now...

Bongani: During my school days I learned that I should not give up and I must always try. I wrote a letter as well.

Ms B: He said something very nice. Excellent my boy. You wrote a letter too.

Shada: I learned that I must always do my homework.

Ms B: What's homework?

Shada: Work that you must do at home.

Ms B: Yes. Should your mummy or daddy do your homework for you...should they write your [English] sentences?

Class: No mam

Ms B: What happens if you do your work?...

Nkosana: You'll get a certificate...

Ms B: Yes but what else have you learned?

Kabelo: I learned that I must not give up. I must play but I must also do my homework and listen to my teacher.

Ms B: Yes when it's time to work you must do your own work. That way you will learn. You should give that your attention...

Learner (girl): My mom said I must not give up and I must do my work by myself. I must not let anyone write my work...

[Video recording: 28 Nov, GR1B]

During this classroom activity, learners are asked to reflect on their experiences in year one of school: 'Today is the last Monday of the whole school year...you are going to tell me something special about this year'. The teacher left the topic broad enough for children to talk about a range of things. Thus the discussion included the following: 'I learned that I should not give up and I must not give up' and 'I learned that...I must play but I must also do my homework'. Interestingly, this discussion

prompts the teacher to ask: 'should your mummy or daddy...write your [English] sentences?'. What is important is Nkosana's contribution that if you do your homework 'you'll get a certificate'. This idea of associating learning (or English) with rewards is interesting, particularly as it characterises learners' own views about what learning is, or at least should be. I find the discourses that children are employing to construct and represent their experiences revealing because they illustrate the extent to which these children (re) create this cultural wheel. The fact that these young learners have come to realise that some products are worthy of being conferred with accolades such as certificates, and others are not is significant. This idea that children appear to hold that rewards or certificate represents good school practice, and therefore it is normal way of doing school characterises the process of symbolic domination (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990a). This means that children are made to believe that the monoglot ideologies that tend to favour some representation more than others are legitimate. Thus I concur with Gebhard (1999, p.544) that 'schools are structured cultural spaces that play a role in the distribution of discourse practices and the production and reproduction of social orders'.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Through the situated accounts of classrooms I have attempted to demonstrate the extent of the 'politics of English' (Holborow, 1999) at play here, and how these politics manifest themselves in everyday interactions between teachers and learners. I have argued that the way in which these particular politics, ideas and conceptions of English as the language of power circulate in these multilingual is strongly tied up with cultural and power structures in a society where the 'standard' variety of English is constructed as the single most important predictor of academic learning, mobility and success in the school. I have also shown that the formation of a monolingual habitus or school identity indexes the culture and ethos of the school. I have conceptualised the embodiment of this monolingual habitus or school identity as privileged ways of performing English at school. Because these school identities are constructed as a norm within the institution, children expected to embody and perform these identities.

I have demonstrated the intricate relationship between performing English, rewards and relationships of power. I have argued that access to a particular brand of English (for example, with ‘big’ English words, good English sentences) and the ability to display such linguistic competence creates opportunities for learners to claim privileged identity positions and to participate in school activities. Conversely, learners who are perceived to lack certain skills in the valued forms of English have limited opportunities to participate in school activities. From this perspective, I have concluded that by unequal positionings that are made available the cultural practices and activities of the school served to include and exclude learners.

In the following chapter I will focus on the status positioning of African languages. Drawing on my classroom data, I will explore how African languages are constructed in deficit terms, and as a problem. Moreover, I aim to demonstrate that amid the dominant English monolingual practices children are still able to manoeuvre this environment to use African languages in some spaces in the school.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Discursive Construction of Languages other than English**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter 6 focused on how English is located or experienced in a linguistically heterogeneous setting, as well as what specific forms of English are constructed as power-knowledge (as in Foucault, 1972, 1980) in moment-by-moment classroom practices and events. I have demonstrated that the types of learning activities and tasks that children are expected to engage in including texts, talking, reading and writing constitute English as the only legitimate way of doing school. I have argued that the classroom is also a site of struggle where school identities and power relations arise as a consequence of valuing certain ways of performing English as well as using standard varieties of English and particular academic registers to enact privileged resources or cultural capital. I have concluded that the currency with which English is often associated in this multilingual environment serves to include and exclude learners based on the sorts of English they have or lack.

My main focus in this chapter concerns the positioning of African languages within this former white school. My analysis here is based on classroom interactions between teachers and learners, and episodes of language exchanges between learners outside the immediate classroom context. Against the hegemony of English discussed in chapter 6, I aim to identify and deconstruct those institutional discourses, that is, sets of statements, utterances and discursive practices which invoke language hierarchies as well as relegate the use of other languages to an inferior position. First, I explore the ways in which African languages are situated in mainstream learning activities, and the kinds of functions that they are made to fulfil. I shall argue that the total downplaying of these languages within the school inadvertently contributes to the process of unequal power relations between languages in which the homogeneity of dominant values is (re) produced, and mother tongues are marginalised. Second, I will look at situations when multilingual learners transgressed or manoeuvred the monolingual culture and ethos of the school to find spaces to insert their diverse repertoires and knowledge. I will conclude that the navigation of this communication space to use of other languages here represents moments of agency.



## 7.2 Positioning Languages: ‘what language do you speak at home?’

Drawing on classroom data, this section investigates the institutional concepts of language that are being articulated, particularly with regard to the ideological complex about which linguistic varieties are recognised as resources and which ones are confined to a status of lower prestige. In addition, I look at the role that Mrs Mokwena plays as a multilingual teacher assistant to uncover and understand some of the social/pedagogical practices surrounding the use of languages other than English.

Extract 35 below is an example of classroom interaction involving Ms Bailey, and later Mrs Mokwena. The focus of this news-time activity is on talk and learners are given opportunities to discuss the backgrounds of their names.

### **Extract 35: ‘What does your name mean?’**

Ms Bailey :...(ADDRESSING THE WHOLE CLASS) OK. Everyone come sit here on the carpet. Right. Stretch. Back straight. (INSTRUCTING THE CLASS TO BE ATTENTIVE).Today you are going to tell me a little bit of news...We have very few children sharing with us about their names and why their mummy and daddy or family chose that name for them. It may be very important. Anyone else got to share something about their name?...Remember, when you are telling your news your voice should come up and up (WITH EMPHASIS)...

Lucky: I asked my mother what does my name mean...and then I said my name is Lucky...I said mummy Lucky means Nhlanhla and Nhlanhla means Lucky.

Ms B: And she said yes\_\_\_?

Lucky: Yes....

Matshediso: My name is Matshediso and it is Zulu.

Ms B: Ok your name is Matshediso and it is a Zulu name (MRS M INTERRUPTS)

Mrs. M: No! It's not Zulu. It's Tswana and Sotho.

Ms B: It's Tswana, fine (MATSHEDISO NODDING). I want to hear all those quiet children...

[Video recording: Mon 21 Nov, GR1B]

What is evident in this extract is the limited space afforded for the use of African languages, as well as the trivial functions that these languages are made to serve. Of interest here, and perhaps even ironical, is the manner in which Mrs Mokwena, in her capacity as a multilingual assistant, positions herself during this news-time activity to facilitate and promote the marginalisation of other languages. Matshediso's contribution ‘My name is Matshediso and it is Zulu’ sets the scene regarding some of the attitudes and limitations around the use of other languages in mainstream classroom interactions. Ms Bailey, a monolingual English speaker, unaware that Matshediso's explanation that: ‘My name is Mathediso and it is Zulu’ is incorrect accepts it ‘Ok your name is Matshediso and it is a Zulu name’ and begins to share it

with the rest of the class. Mrs Mokwena promptly disqualifies the status of what the learner has said 'No! it's not Zulu. It's [a] Tswana and Sotho [name]'. This short exchange enables Ms Bailey to convey to the learner that her name is of Tswana origin. However, Mrs Mokwena does not attempt to elicit more information from the learner, or even explain in an African language why this particular name is Tswana or Sotho as she claims. Even in Lucky's case earlier, we do not see the teacher assistant attempting to engage languages other than English to explore learners' responses and to provide a forum for discussion, in African languages: 'I asked my mother what does my name mean...then I said mummy Lucky means Nhlanhla and Nhlanhla means Lucky'. Although Lucky is correct to say that his name is Nhlanhla in Zulu, it is not clear whether he understands what his name signifies in Zulu as the task requires.

Considering Matshediso and Lucky's situation, we see the extent to which classroom practices and activities serve as conduits making African languages to assume a less important status despite the fact that the constitution of this classroom is diverse linguistically. The irony here relates to the status of Mrs Mokwena as someone whose official duty is to interpret learning materials into different African languages as well as engage learners in those languages. It is noticeable in moments like this where she addresses Matshediso 'No! [your name is] not Zulu. It's Tswana and Sotho'; that she tends to favour English despite her role to facilitate learning through African languages where necessary. This then begs the question: what are the implications of Mrs Mokwena's role in shaping particular language values, meanings and subjects/selves in this multilingual setting? In view of this, I shall argue that the explicit downplay of African languages in classrooms, or treating them as less important, inevitably marks these languages as inadequately resourced to support teaching and learning. This idea of what linguistic products count and what does not is in line with Blommaert, Creve and Willaert (2006, p.36) claim that the dominant ideology of schooling, particularly in multilingual settings, is such that demarcations are being made between those products that are recognised as resources while others are disqualified as such.

The following extracts (36, 37 and 38) will also illustrate my point that language (as well as discourses that describe it) plays a crucial role in constructing reality at JP,

and the multiple perspectives and values that accompany that reality. Extract 36 below exemplifies salient moments about the relationship (and tensions) between dominant linguistic practices, African languages and the kinds of subject positions that learners claim for themselves in this context. As is the case in extract 35, extract 36 is taken from Ms Bailey's class and the theme of the activity centres on the definitions and significance of individual names. This lesson activity takes place on Monday morning during which Ms Bailey, Mrs Mokwena and the researcher are present.

**Extract 36: 'My name is Ayanda [and] it is English...'**

Ms Bailey: Good morning Grade 1.

Class: Good morning Ms Bailey, good morning Ms Pinky, good morning Mrs Mokwena and good morning friends.

Ms B: Thank you my children. Be quiet now. Breathe in. Breathe out. Hands up. Hands down. Okay. I gave you homework on Friday. It's about your names. I said you must ask your mummy to write it in your diary. The meaning of your name [and in] what language is your name. Put your lunch at the back and come with your diary to the carpet (SITUATED AT THE FRONT). Some of you have money for school fees...I want all those children with school fees to come and stand here (LEARNERS QUEUED NEXT TO MS B'S TABLE). Listen children, I'll be going to a meeting soon and Mrs Mokwena will be here with you. I want you to behave yourselves Grade 1 (.) do you hear me?

Class: Yes mam (IN UNISON)

Ms B: What did you find out about your name Ayanda?

Ayanda: My name is Ayanda. It's English and it means... (MRS M INTERRUPTS)

Mrs M: No! It is not English.

Ms B: What language do you speak at home?

Ayanda: Zulu.

Ms B: Surely your name is Zulu then. It's a beautiful Zulu name. I like it (MRS LEAVES FOR HER MEETING)

Mrs M: (SPEAKS IN ZULU) uAyanda isiZulu. Igama elimnandi. Ubuze umama (AYANDA NODS). Next... (POINTING AT TUMELO).

*(Ayanda is a Zulu name. It's a very nice name. You must find out from your mother what it means.)*

Tumelo: My name is Tumelo and it means faith.

Mrs M: Good. It is a Pedi or Tswana name. What language do you speak at home?

Tumelo: Pedi

Ms M: Yes then your name is a Pedi name. Next...

Kamogelo: My name is Kamogelo. It is a Tswana name. It means acceptance.

Mrs M: Who is next? Khothatso what does your name mean? (SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS). You did not ask your parents. That is not good children. You did not ask your parents...Khothatso means courage. It is a Sotho name...

[Video recording: Mon 7 Nov, GR1B]

My discussion here focuses on how African languages are discursively positioned in specific classroom moments and learners' own identity positions within these discourse constructions of language. While extract 35 shows an unwillingness to encourage the use African languages, in extract 36 Mrs Mokwena makes an effort to

use Zulu albeit not meaningfully, thus raising pertinent questions about the circumstances around which African languages are deemed necessary and the specific purposes for which these languages are seen to serve in mainstream classroom activities. Moreover, what messages and understandings are being communicated about how different language commodities fit in the grand scheme of things? Extract 36 demonstrates ways in which African languages are positioned as a last resort, and only employed in situations where learners experienced difficulties in the LoLT (i.e. English). Like in the previous extract, Mrs Mokwena's role seems to be keeping an eye on whether these multilingual learners can articulate or translate the understandings of their African names in English. Such sensitive activities relating to naming practices and identities, along with other everyday discourse practices, contribute cumulatively to the construction of a language hierarchy where English carries greatest value. It is not surprising therefore that learners like Ayanda desire to be associated with the commodity attributed the most worth, rather than their own mother tongues, as can be evidenced in the following example:

Ms B: What did you find out about your name Ayanda?

Ayanda: My name is Ayanda. It's English and it means... (MRS M INTERRUPTS)

Mrs M: No! It is not English.

Ms B: What language do you speak at home?

Ayanda: Zulu.

Ms B: Surely your name is Zulu then. It's a beautiful Zulu name. I like it (MRS LEAVES FOR HER MEETING)

Mrs M: (SPEAKS IN ZULU) uAyanda isiZulu. Igama elimnandi. Ubuze umama (AYANDA NODS). Next... (POINTING AT TUMELO).

*[Ayanda is a Zulu name. It's a very nice name. You must find out from your mother what it means.]*

This excerpt provides two important insights into the gulf created between African languages and English in this learning environment, and how learners come to appropriate and situate themselves in relation to this linguistic divide. First, Ayanda's response is interesting because it highlights one of the critical issues in this thesis concerning how learners have come to value English over everything and the kind of identity positions they claim in relation to this language. It appears that by saying that 'My name is Ayanda. It's English...' the learner is trying to appropriate some of the understandings, ideas and beliefs about language that she has acquired through her schooling. My interpretation of this episode is that by identifying her name as English, Ayanda is showing that she has embodied the dominance associated with English and

as a result favours its existence over other languages available in this context. Even though Ms Bailey makes positive remarks upon hearing that Ayanda's home language is Zulu: 'Surely your name is Zulu then. It's a beautiful Zulu name', as if to endorse that it is no problem owning up to the fact that one has an African name. However, that does not persuade the learner to change her position. While Ms Bailey gives such an affirmative comment that Ayanda is a beautiful name, presumably a name to be proud of, it is important to recall that she is an English monolingual speaker. Given this background, it is unlikely that Ms Bailey is aware of what Ayanda may mean or the particularities pertaining to this Zulu name, as is clear in rest of the extract. Even though Ms Bailey's commentary '[Ayanda] is a beautiful Zulu name. I like it' appears well-intended to acknowledge cultural diversity in this classroom, nonetheless her attitude is tokenistic rather than to facilitate learning. This gloss over of knowledge other than in English mirrors low value and status stacked against mother tongues; as well as construction of these languages as having no legitimate place in the school.

The exchanges below reveal the way in which classroom activities can serve as powerful vehicles for maintaining and reproducing language hierarchies.

Tumelo: My name is Tumelo and it means faith.

Mrs M: Good. It is a Pedi or Tswana name. What language do you speak at home?

Tumelo: Pedi

Ms M: Yes then your name is a Pedi name...

Kamogelo: My name is Kamogelo. It is a Tswana name. It means acceptance.

Mrs M:...Kgothatso what does your name mean? (SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS)...

Khothatso means courage. It is a Sotho name...

While it may appear relevant for these multilingual learners to explain their names in their own mother tongues we see the teacher assistant favouring English interpretations over African languages. The fact that learners like Tumelo and Kamogelo are able to give their accounts in English as expected seems to convey the message that they will find themselves with more opportunities than those who lack such skills in English. On the contrary, Khothatso and Ayanda's inability to provide English translations limits their participation in this lesson. What is important, however, is the extent to which multilingual classrooms like this one are agents of monolingual practices and activities.

Second, although extract 36 may give the false impression that African languages are accommodated during classroom events, it is important to realise the limited function that the languages are made to assume. For instance, this insignificant role could be seen in the exchanges where Mrs Mokwena reiterates Ms Bailey's statement to Ayanda in Zulu - 'Mrs M: uAyanda isiZulu. Igama elimnandi. Ubuze umama. [*Ayanda is a Zulu name. It's a very nice name. You must find out from your mother what it means.*]'.

Throughout this classroom lesson, it is also apparent that when an African language is deemed necessary its use is limited to a few words, small phrases or a gloss on English. Evidently, African languages here, as in extract 38, are positioned in such a manner as to suggest that they are somewhat 'unfit' for the purposes of classroom learning. The fact that the use of languages other than English only come about as a way to facilitate the teaching and learning in English illustrates the kind of inferior status attributed to those languages at JP. It is not surprising then that children like Ayanda prefer to identify themselves with English – after all it is the language that matters in this school. This sense of positioning that Ayanda claims for herself in this social space for me echoes Bourdieu's (1990a, 1990b, 1991) game metaphor particularly the fact that actors have goals and interests which they knowingly or unknowingly pursue in any game<sup>34</sup>. While all games (i.e. learning in this case) have rules that determine what players can and cannot do, what resources are legitimate and not, what identity positions are privileged and not, players may move skilfully or strategically to accomplish their aspirations, as it can be evidenced with Ayanda.

Extract 37 from Mrs Zondo's class introduces some of the paradoxes, and even tensions, relating to the perpetual devaluing of languages other than English in mainstream school activities. As was the case during the period of my research, most of the lessons and activities were built around phonics, sentence construction, talk, reading and comprehension skills in English. In this lesson Mrs Zondo is focusing on sounds including 'a', 'i', 'o' and how these can be used to formulate words.

**Extract 37: 'what is a kit'**

Mrs Z: Who is this? (REFERRING TO THE RESEARCHER)

Class: Miss Pinky (AT THE TOP OF THEIR VOICES)

<sup>34</sup> As I have discussed in chapter 4, Bourdieu uses the notion of a game as metaphor for social life.

Mrs Z: Greet her then.

Class: Good morning Miss Pinky. How are you today? God bless you.

R: Good morning Grade 1.

Mrs Z: Sh! Breathe in. Breathe out. Jump. Higher. And higher. If you are making noise I'm not going to choose you. I will only choose those children who behave. Fold your arms. Put your feet together and concentrate. When I call out your name you should say the word that I will be pointing at with my ruler. You must look at my ruler [and] your eyes [should be] on the chalkboard. Lehlogonolo start

Lehlogonolo: (SHE READS OUT THE WORDS IN THE SECOND ROW WHERE THE TEACHER'S RULER IS POINTED.)

#### ON THE CHALKBOARD

|     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Van | Pan | Rat | jam | nap |
| Pig | Lid | Kit | fin | wig |
| mop | Now | Dog | fox | box |

Mrs Z: Lehlogonolo look at this word properly ('KIT' WHICH SHE PRONOUNCED AS 'KITE'). Who can help her? Khosi what is this word?

Khosi: 'Kit' mam

Mrs Z: Repeat after her (ADDRESSING THE CLASS) What is a kit?

Sam: Mam sometimes when they call it they say kitty kitty come here.

Clive: Mam it's a baby.

Mrs Z: What is a kit Grade 1? (SILENCE)

Mrs M: Grade 1 you know what a kit is. Some of you have it at home. Some people keep it in the house...some people keep it outside. I'm sure you see it all the time (CHILDREN NAMING THINGS LIKE BIRDS, DOG, CARS, ETC.)... It meows

Gao: (RAISING HER HAND PROMPTLY) I know mam. I know mam

Mrs Z: What is a kit Gao?

Gao: It's a baby cat.

Mrs Z: What is a baby cat?

Gao: It's a kitten.

Mrs Z: Clever girl. And all those clothes you were wearing in the morning when we were doing PE (PHYSICAL EDUCATION)... they are called a kit as well.

Clive: Like the soccer one mam...

Mrs Z: Yes my boy. Soccer players put their kit or clothes in sports bags...

[Video recording: Wed 19 Oct, GR1Z]

Of significance here is the role that both Mrs Mokwena and Mrs Zondo play to perpetrate, support and encourage monolingual practices among young children with such diverse linguistic repertoires. Although the extract shows this seeming reluctance to utilise other knowledge resources, it is important to note that like Mrs Mokwena, Mrs Zondo is proficient in a number of African languages spoken by her learners. There is something to be said here about how even multilingual teachers themselves have to come to regard African languages as a problem rather than resources that can be utilised for such learning purposes. I shall argue that by sidelining or alienation of African languages multilingual teachers orient children to monoglot ideologies that consequently assimilate them.

While in extract 35 and 36 African languages are positioned as the last option, extract 37 shows the level of gate-keeping that takes place to regulate language behaviour in this classroom. The key moment is when Lehlogonolo misreads the word 'kit' as 'kite' leading Mrs Zondo to request the class to assist: 'Who can help her? Khosi what is this word [i.e. kit]?'. Following Khosi's correct pronunciation Mrs Zondo goes on to ask the class 'what is a kit?'. The interesting thing is how both teachers, despite having access to different language varieties advocate the supreme value of English, leaving no space for alternative knowledge/languages. For instance, albeit amusing, we see the great lengths that the teacher assistant goes to in an attempt to get a definition of a 'kit' from the class: 'Grade 1 you know what a kit is. Some of you have it at home. Some people keep it in the house...some people keep it outside. I'm sure you see it all the time...It meows'. Switching into another language may facilitate understanding here. However, Mrs Mokwena manoeuvres this classroom exercise such that there is no need for anything but English. Hence, after fruitless attempts like 'some people keep it in the house [and] some...keep it outside' followed by a series of incorrect answers Mrs Mokwena gives the class this clue 'it meows'. Looking at Sam's response '...sometimes when they call it they say kitty kitty come here' it is clear that this learner has formed the idea that a 'kit' is an informal or diminutive reference to a kitten.

The manner in which Mrs Zondo positions herself throughout this lesson is particularly important because despite being able to code-switch she does not use this communicative strategy in her teaching. In fact, I have observed that she tends to favour English during her lessons, and only rarely would she employ other languages in social situations and events. Mrs Zondo's status as a black teacher in a formerly white school may be a contributing factor to why she does not utilise her multilingual skills to support learning considering her earlier comments that 'you'll be in big trouble if you teach [black] children their language' because 'where there is a white person everything [is perceived to go] well' (see extracts 21 and 22). Moreover, perhaps this is so because the institution prides itself as an English medium school, as well as its monolingual ethos. Hence the use of alternative language/knowledge is discursively constructed as a 'problem' in daily practice, that is, as something that may interfere with the actual business of learning English rather than something that



benefits classroom experience. For instance, when I asked Mrs Zondo about her own positioning in relation to different representations of knowledge, in extract 38 she commented in this way:

**Extract 38: ‘they cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of their languages’**

R:...I have noticed in the morning that neither you nor Mrs Mokwena attempted to use other languages when I wondered whether there is a particular reason for that or (.) let me put it this way; why is it that using other languages did not seem to come naturally?

Mrs Z: We stick to English so that they can get used to it and understand things better...sometimes our children cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of their languages [i.e. African languages]...some children come to me and say ‘mam she is starting me and I say are you a car’...you see...they just [make direct] translate [ion] like that...

[reconstructed from field notes: Wed 19 Oct, GR1Z]

Mrs Zondo’s account constructs African languages as ‘a problem for the learning of English’. The fact that Mrs Zondo even mentions that teachers tend to ‘stick to English so that [children] can get used to it and understand things’ and further says that ‘sometimes our children cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of their languages’ positions multilingualism as an impediment and monolingualism as a resource for learning English subject matter content. Although not a particular focus in my thesis, it is important to underline that Grade 1 teachers believed that speaking English most of the time, and at the expense of learners’ home languages, will accelerate the learning of English and assist children to master the curriculum. However, this is not something that is supported by educational research. As I have discussed in chapter 2, both local (for example, Bloch, 2002; Heugh, 1995, 2002b; Probyn, 2005; Vinjevoold, 1999) and international (see Cummins, 1996; García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzmán, 2006; Mohanty, 2006; Ramanathan, 2005) research on language and literacy show, contrary to teachers’ beliefs, that the use of learners’ languages are resources. Therefore, the highly assimilationist practices evidenced here, particularly in the early stages, may not only contribute to low achievements in English, but also lead to a decline in first language proficiency.

The point that I had tried to demonstrate here relates to my argument that there seems to be a romanticised view regarding what African languages should represent at JP. For instance, if we look at the interview data in chapter 5, the institution is epitomised

by staff as diverse and multilingual. However, the classroom activities and events here clearly show the extent to which other languages are perceived as mere symbolic tokens than as resources that could enhance language learning, curriculum and promote understandings. I have illustrated that when other languages are given some space it is only to the extent that there is no possible risk to, or interference with, the continued dominance of English within these learning sites. The irony here is that in spite of the teachers' good intentions and efforts to provide learners with access to English *the* cultural capital, compromising African languages ignores the linguistic and educational needs of learners. In this way then, the education field continues to be responsible for maintaining and reproducing language hierarchies.

Furthermore, I argue that through this unequal positioning African languages are constructed as a 'problem' while constructing English as the indispensable medium or 'resource' that offers mobility and more academic opportunities. Therefore, the learning practices within Grade 1 classrooms embody institutional ideologies and ethos and promote what Fairclough (1989, p.75) calls 'inculcation' into existing social norms and power relations. My data analysis chapters show that this incultation, or what Soudien (1998a, 1998b, 2004) terms assimilation, is supported and facilitated by a variety of classroom materials that children are asked to engage with, the promotion of certain ideologies and endorsement of particular knowledge and habitus.

The following section of the chapter builds on the notion of language ideologies and hegemony providing an image about the reality of the subjects (i.e. learners), and how they understand and play out the different linguistic meanings that are constructed in their day-to-day experiences of school.

### **7.3 Multilingualism beyond Monolingual Boundaries: 'Mam Laura is speaking in Zulu'**

This section of the chapter aims to give an insight into ways in which some learners are able to find spaces to insert languages other than English amid the highly monolingual practices that mediated Grade 1 learning experiences. As shall become apparent in my data, these spaces and moments of interaction are realised in the formal classroom, as well as outside the immediate classroom, especially when the teachers are not watching. Based on the kinds of discourses learners employed during

these salient communication events, I intend to explore the complex relationship between monoglot ideologies, representation and agency. I shall illustrate the extent to which the dominant culture and ethos has taken hold among a group of year one children. I will focus specifically on how young black children in this former white institution have come to regard English as a natural medium of communication, and their own languages as somehow odd or strange. Further to this, I aim to show the creative and subversive activities these learners sometimes engage in which counter dominant cultural practices. I shall argue that by inserting other knowledge/languages these learners are creating spaces for their use, and perhaps even subverting the very acts of assimilation that define their primary school experiences.

The birthday celebration activity below took place during normal school hours, just before the end of the school day. It is common practice in Grade 1 classrooms to have birthday events like this one for learners. On this occasion Brian is turning 7 years old and his mother has brought in a Spiderman cake and some goodie bags for the class. The teacher has set up the table in the front of the class where Brian is asked to sit with six of his friends while the rest of the class remains seated at their desks. To mark this special day, the teacher puts a crown on Brian's head and he looks like a prince.

**Extract 39: 'Sing [happy birthday] in Zulu, Sotho or any of the [African] languages'**

Mrs Bailey: When you come back from your break we are going to celebrate Brian's birthday...(AFTER BREAK)...Brian call your friends. If you don't hear your name don't come to the front...Brian's mum brought us a nice spiderman cake and sweets. Now I want you to count with me to see how many candles are here (COUNTING)

Class: 7

Mrs B: Good. That means that Brian is seven year old. (ADDRESSING BRIAN) You are a big boy now. Let's all sing happy birthday and wish him all nice things...

Class: Happy Birthday to you (REPEATED 3 TIMES)...Happy Birthday from all of us. How old are you now?

Brian: I am seven years (SHOWING HIS 7 FINGERS)

Mrs B:..Thank you. Grade 1 now I want you to sing a nice song for Brian. You can sing in Zulu, Sotho or any of the [African] languages... (SILENCE)...How do you sing happy birthday when you are at home? Sing in any language (CONTINUED SILENCE)...Sing any song that you like then. Anything you have learned from music [i.e. music classes offered at school]...Audrey I know you can sing very well...just sing anything you like my girl...

Audrey: O gole gole, o gole gole, o lekane le tlou (ABOUT 8 LEARNERS JOINED IN TO SING IN SOTHO). Hip hip hooray. Happy birthday Brian. Happy birthday to you... [Metaphoric way to say, 'may you see many more years to come'.]

Mrs B: Thank you my girl...

[Video recording: Tues 8 Nov, GR1B]

This extract portrays the consequences of the process of (de)valuing for linguistic representation and subjectivities at JP. What is important, however, is how the power of the dominance of English, at the expense of African languages, influences learners' attitudes towards these different languages. In this excerpt learners are invited to sing a birthday song in any language other than English: 'Grade 1 now I want you to sing a nice song for Brian...in Zulu, Sotho or any of the [African] languages'. However, Ms Bailey's request is met with continued silence despite the fact these children have access to a range of linguistic repertoires. Up until this moment the class participated actively and seemed enthusiastic singing the happy birthday song in English. Although Ms Bailey manages to persuade Audrey in the end 'Audrey I know you can sing very well...just sing anything you like' the majority of the class does not show an interest in singing along. The irony is that what started off as an exciting event involving everyone somehow became a dull moment with only a handful of learners left to sing in Sotho, an African language: 'o gole gole, o gole gole, o lekane le tlou [*may you see many more years to come*]'.

The fact that these children seem so reluctant to use their own African languages, amid clear instruction from the teacher to do so, suggests that the class is perhaps perplexed by the teacher's 'unexpected' invitation. It is obvious throughout my data that it is not customary to use African languages during classroom activities, and when used they are often used in limited ways. In view of this then it is not surprising that no one willingly takes up the offer to sing in Zulu or Sotho. I would argue that due to the hegemonic cultural practices of the school, these children have been assimilated to perceive their own mother tongues as inferior ways of representation. This clearly demonstrates that the extent to which the language and culture of these students is incorporated into or prohibited in their schooling and in schooling practices shapes the kinds of subjectivities that are being produced. The following extracts 40 and 41 also illustrate the sorts of attitudes and values that learners associate with different languages. Contrary to the previous extract where learners appear to refrain from the unconventional uses of African languages, here we evidence of some of these children engaging in the use of the same languages.

This exchange between learners occurs during lunch time in Mrs Zondo's classroom. While the rest of the class goes out for lunch, five girls and two boys decided to stay

behind. I am in the classroom all through this conversation interaction, and so is Mrs Zondo busy with her marking.

**Extract 40: ‘Mam Laura is speaking in Zulu’**

Mrs Z:..It’s break time now. When you come back we will continue with our reading sheets. Simon you must play nicely with other children today. I don’t want any complaints...surely you don’t want me to write a letter to your father...okay then...  
(EVERYONE WENT OUT EXCEPT 5 GIRLS AND 2 BOYS)

Nelson: Mam can we stay here?

Mrs Z: You don’t want to go outside and play?

Nelson: Yes.

Mrs Z: Okay then...I don’t want to hear mam mam because I’m marking...otherwise you’ll all go outside...(LEARNERS ARE SEATED AT BACK OF THE CLASSROOM. FOR MOST OF THE TIME THEY ARE COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH UNTIL LAURA SAID SOMETHING IN ZULU. THEY ALL START GIGGLING.)

Patrick: (SHOUTING) Mam Mam listen to Laura...Mam Laura is speaking in Zulu. She is speaking to us in Zulu. She says ‘hayi yenza umzebezi wakho wena’ [SPEAKS IN ZULU]

[...*Mind your own business and do your work.*]

Irene: Halala! Laura (A COLLOQUIAL EXPRESSION TO MEAN THAT ONE IS IN TROUBLE)

Mrs Z: It’s okay (SEEMING UNINTERESTED, AND CONTINUES WITH HER WORK)

Patrick: Don’t talk to me... (ADDRESSING LAURA)

[Audio recorded field notes: Wed 16 Nov, GR1Z]

Extract 40 exemplifies issues regarding the embodiment of monoglot ideologies of the school which favour some representations and not others, on the one hand. On the other hand, it points out specific ways that learners are able to navigate this highly policed and monitored linguistic environment to weave in African languages. The manner in which Patrick constructs Laura’s behaviour is revealing: ‘Mam listen...Laura is speaking in Zulu’. Moreover, the type of excitement (i.e. in the form of giggles) that Laura’s use of Zulu generates gives a vivid impression of the language attitudes that existed among these young children. The fact that Patrick thinks it is necessary to draw the teacher’s attention to this use of Zulu, and Irene’s immediate exclamation ‘halala! [You are in trouble!]’ implies that Laura’s use of Zulu is not typical of the dominant cultural practices they are accustomed to at school. While the teacher seems unconcerned, playing down Patrick’s warning by simply saying ‘it’s okay’, the learners’ behaviour indicate the level of their allegiance to the monolingual ideology agenda associated with this space and place. Hence, linguistic displays such as Zulu are perceived out of character and therefore abnormal. Taking into account the ideological conceptions mediating the socialisation processes evident in discourse constructions like ‘we have to use English...it is for their own good’ as Ms Bailey put

it in extract 25; and according to Mrs Zondo: ‘we stick to English so that they can get used to it...sometimes our children cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of their [African] languages’ as in extract 38; it is understandable why children perceive Zulu as lacking legitimacy. It is important to realise that the language policing among learners here is consistent with Foucault’s (1977, 1972, 1980) notion of surveillance. In particular, that practices in institutions such as school comprise surveillance activities where the normal is distinguished from the abnormal. And those like Laura whose actions depart from the accepted standards of speaking languages other than English are seen to be ‘benignly deviant’ (Foucault, 1977).

The interaction between learners in extract 41 further underscores the pertinent subject of identity particularly with regard to the way Laura is being identified and positioned by her colleagues as someone who is deviant or nonconforming. This in part explains why Patrick raised the alarm to alert Mrs Zondo even though she did not hear it herself. This said, my contention is that Laura’s use of Zulu signifies agency, even though limited. As a member of this community Laura is aware of the linguistic expectations in Grade 1 and even possible consequences for her behaviour. I interpret Laura’s behaviour here as a way of subverting the dominant ideological practices. Laura’s subject position here shows us that learners can sometimes use creative means to navigate the fabrication of a monolingual ethos by bringing in languages that are often viewed as interfering with their learning and speech. This brings up an important question about the sorts of things that may be getting unleashed in uncensored moments like the one in the preceding extract.

Extract 41 also underline the type of multilingual activities that become visible during ‘unpoliced zones’ (Stein, 2003a), that is, when teachers are not keeping guard. While this social interaction takes place outside the actual confines of the classroom, I use this example to demonstrate the types of language choices that individual learners make in relation to the monolingual project of the school. Language moments like that in extract 41 cannot be divorced from the broader institutional practices aiming to (re) produce certain ways of being, acting and beliefs. The following communication exchange between Grade 1 learners from Mrs Zondo’s class and two prefects is after the lunch time break. As is routine in Grade 1, learners are expected to queue just next to their respective classrooms after each break time awaiting teachers’ instructions to

enter the classroom. When teachers are not immediately available as is the case here, prefects take over to manage the situation until teachers arrive. The school prefects are normally in higher grades and their role is to ensure that learners observe the school's rules and regulations such as being quiet during assembly meetings, recording late-comers and those without proper school uniform (also see chapter 3). As I have mentioned earlier, they are also entrusted with whistles, just like the teachers, which they can use at their discretion to get things into order.

**Extract 41: Tholang! [Keep Quiet!]**

Prefect A:..Grade 1Z you are making noise. How many times should I tell you...You are not even in straight lines. Look your line is crooked (ADDRESSING THE BOYS) Keep quiet. Shut up! (RAISING HER VOICE).

Prefect B: Grade 1 what is wrong with you. You are supposed to be quiet now. Do you want me to tell Mrs Zondo [about your behaviour] when she comes back. (AT THIS POINT THE GIRLS SEEM TO CALM DOWN BUT THE BOYS 'DELIBERATELY' SPOKE AT THE TOP OF THEIR VOICES)

Prefect A: John, Simon and all of you there (A GROUP OF BOYS)...shush! (BLOWING HER WHISTLE BUT TO NO AVAIL. THEN SHE SWITCHES TO SOTHO) Hey! lona le a rasa. Ke neng ke bua le lona. Le bana ba jwang. Tholang! (SPEAKS IN SOTHO)...

[...hey! you are making noise. How many times should I repeat myself? I've been asking you to keep quiet. What kind of kids are you. Keep quiet!]

Tumelo: Mam is coming (IT SLOWLY QUIETENED, AND THE PREFECT SWITCHED TO ENGLISH)

Prefect A:..All those boys at the back [who are still making noise] I am going to report you to Mrs Zondo...Njabulo tuck in your shirt...and straight lines please...

Mrs Z: (MRS ZONDO APPEARS)...Grade 1 I cannot believe this...Grade 1 I could hear your noise from the office. I am very disappointed. That is bad manners children...Clap your hands Grade 1Z. Jump. Jump. Higher. Higher. Now let's sing...Don't be shy...Okay now, let's get in the classroom nicely and quietly...

[Field notes: Thurs 13 Oct GR1Z]

Like in the previous extract, this interaction between learners provides an insight into the kinds of language activities that occur amongst learners themselves, as well as the identity positions that they take up when teachers are out of sight. The fact that the prefect, in her position of authority, decides to code-switch into Sotho is remarkable. Obviously, the prefect's role is to make sure that school rules are observed. Hence the following commands: 'Grade 1Z you are making noise. How many times should I tell you...you are not even in straight lines...do you want me to tell Mrs Zondo [about your behaviour]'. Since prefects often hold the fort in the absence of teachers it can also be assumed that among other things they are to monitor any language anomalies that may occur. This said, I have not observed any situation during my research where

prefects reprimanded children for using other languages because Grade 1 learners tended to communicate in English during their presence. The paradox though is that while the prefects' mere presence appeared to silence the use of other languages among Grade 1 learners, these prefects would occasionally switch between languages particularly in matters of discipline like this one: '...le a rasa. Ke neng ke bua le lona... Tholang! (IN SOTHO) [*you are making noise. How many times should I repeat myself? Keep quiet!*]

What is interesting, however, is the extent to which these multilingual learners, including prefects, collude to find spaces to use Sotho and Zulu languages. For instance, when Tumelo notices that Mrs Zondo is approaching, he immediately cautions everyone: 'Mam is coming'. Tumelo's comment here can be interpreted to mean two things: First, it is a warning to his Grade 1 colleagues to behave accordingly and stop making noise. Second, it can be argued that Tumelo's alert is also directed at Prefect A to discontinue using Sotho as she quickly reverts to English upon hearing that Mrs Zondo is close by. This moment of interaction gives a subtle impression that Prefect A's use of Sotho is perhaps in breach of the linguistic culture, ideals and practices of this school. Hence none of the learners, including prefects, want to be seen or heard speaking languages other than English particularly by the staff, unless instructed to do so. The main point I wish to highlight here relates to the range of behaviours that learners display in the face of dominant ideologies and hegemonic practices. The fact that these children are able to find creative ways, at times collude, to insert their multilingual identities is interesting. This brings about an important concern that this thesis addresses regarding the linguistic uniformity or monoligualism that this school strives to achieve within such a multilingual setting.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored the positioning of African language at JP, as well as how the discourses about and around these languages shape and reshape learners' identities. I have shown that African languages are constructed as having limited currency with no legitimate place in the school. For instance, when African languages are used during classroom activities it is primarily for symbolic reasons rather than for anything meaningful such as facilitating teaching and learning. In this way, the dominance of English as valued material is perpetuated and maintained despite the



fact that the children are multilingual themselves. I have argued that the variety of activities and practices that participate in school classrooms homogenise and assimilate children under the guise of linguistic uniformity and standards.

Furthermore, my data reveals the complex relationship between children's own constructions of and attitudes towards different languages, and the kinds of identity positions that they claim within these linguistic or discourse constructions. My analysis has demonstrated that some of these learners used their multilingual repertoires in creative ways in the face of domination. That is, learners negotiated the highly monolingual environment of the school so that they can use languages other than English. I have also shown that those children who engaged in linguistic activities such as using their own mother tongues are constructed as deviant. I have concluded then that by devaluing or suppressing other languages, school and its related discourse practices plays a major role in the production and reproduction of monoglot ideologies.

In the final chapter 8 I explore the implications of the study for multilingual children learning in previously white English medium schools in South Africa. My main focus will be to reflect on how the thesis has answered the research questions I set out to investigate. I will also demonstrate how the study contributes to knowledge, its strengths and limitations, and finally I shall identify future directions for research and practice.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

#### 8.1 Introduction

The main orientation of this chapter is to explore the implications of this study for learning in desegregated primary schools in post-apartheid South Africa. I will begin by reflecting on the research findings in order to demonstrate how this thesis has answered questions that I have set out to explore. Furthermore, I will look at how this study contributes to knowledge, particularly with regard to English in education. Finally, I will consider the strengths and limitations of this study, as well as map out some suggestions for future research.

#### 8.2 The Hegemony of English in Multilingual Classrooms

This thesis set out to explore the extent to which black multilingual children attending a former 'white only' English medium school are apprenticed (and assimilated) into the dominant language, culture and ethos of the school. In particular, I asked how young multilingual children are socialised as learners into monolingual ideologies that favour English; and how differential access to English as an institutionally valued resource locates these children in year one of their schooling. Drawing on sociological and post-structural epistemologies, I was interested in how English is discursively constructed and legitimated in everyday school life to the disadvantage of other resources, and how its dominant positioning serves to include learners who have access to it and exclude those with limited access. Finally, I have explored how English as an unequally distributed resource plays an important role in the production and reproduction of social difference and social inequality, thus illuminating social justice questions about unequal opportunities in the education system. The findings of this thesis speak to the ways in which language ideologies play out in day-to-day school activities as mediated by the dominant discourses that privilege monolingual practices.

In this thesis I have analysed two sets of data drawn from interviews with Grade 1 teachers and the deputy principal of the school (chapter 5); secondly, data which is based on classroom interactions and practices in chapter 6 and 7, which I discuss in

turn. Through analysing interview data this study identifies how English and other languages/knowledge are constituted and constructed from an institutional point of view as represented by staff. I have also explored the staff's perceptions about the English medium language policy, the pedagogic activities, cultural and language practices of the school and have argued that the policy and practices interlock and synchronise to produce and advance hegemonic monolingualism. With respect to the classroom data, I have analysed the relationship between discourse practices, the distribution of English resources and identity positions. This data reveal the extent to which the dominant discourses serve to facilitate and perpetuate English monolingual ideologies in actual classroom interactions and activities, as well as how learners are positioned differently within these discourses. These data provide variable and overlapping views and orientations about the favourable positioning of English as the language that counts as legitimate, whereas other languages are constructed as subordinate.

In Chapter 5 I have demonstrated that the language policy at Johannesburg Primary school with English as the language of instruction, Afrikaans as the second language choice and then Zulu as the third additional language not only exemplifies an unequal hierarchical relationship between languages but also serves to continue the apartheid era legacy where only English and Afrikaans were official, and African languages were marginalised. It should be noted that while Afrikaans and Zulu appear in the school's language policy document as official, Afrikaans is taught as a formal subject from Grade 4 while 'a little bit of Zulu' is introduced in Grade 4. I have suggested that the fact that Zulu, a historically disadvantaged language, is positioned at the bottom of the hierarchical 'pecking order' (Phillipson, 2001) in the school's language policy is consistent with the previous status quo. While this thesis is not advocating the use of mother tongue languages as media of instruction, I have argued that the third positioning of Zulu and the fact that it is pushed into domains or roles of lesser power illustrates the continual diminution of languages other than English at Johannesburg Primary school. I have discussed that this unequal status of languages is in contradiction with the post-apartheid era's constitutional commitment to linguistic diversity and multilingualism which aims to raise the status of previously disadvantaged languages, as well as promote an additive approach to learning. Despite this optimistic national language policy the language practices at this previously white

school have not changed. In fact, my analysis of the data indicates that the English dominated linguistic status quo at Johannesburg Primary school is unlikely to change because parents send their children to the school in pursuit of the cultural capital which they see as enhancing their life chances. They believe that an early introduction to English will accelerate the acquisition of this language, and generally benefit their education.

In my discussion I have also pointed out that the popularity of English among black parents and the fact that they supported and endorsed an English-only approach to learning for their children from Grade 1-3, demonstrates the extent to which parents themselves are complicit in the misrecognition (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b, 1990, 1991) or valorisation of English as a superior language. In this way, ideologies of language are not about language alone (Woolard, 1998), but are always tangled or intertwined with and influenced by historical, political, social, economic and identity questions in society. Following Gramsci's (1971) view of hegemony that dominant ideas and cultural domination are sustained over time through securing consent from subordinated groups through ideological persuasion, I have suggested that, by opting for straight-for-English instruction parents have actually contributed to the reproduction of the hegemony of English. I have claimed that parents' positive attitudes towards English mirror realities outside the school particularly about the complex relationship between language, access and social class in post-apartheid South Africa where English is perceived as a gateway to success and a predictor for socio-economic mobility.

In Chapter 6 I have demonstrated that the dominant discourses, cultural practices and classroom activities in year one of schooling constitute and construct English as a legitimate language, in Bourdieu's (1991) terms – language that is valued, language with authority and language that must be heard. These ideologies of language can be understood as regimes of truth in the Foucauldian sense, that is, frames of reference and practices of signification which position English as commonsensical and natural (Foucault, 1972, 1977) within the school. The positioning of English as the cultural capital and as having currency illuminates the role of school in the reproduction of social inequality and social stratification. I have argued that the hegemonic discourses privileging English as the only language that provides greater academic mobility and

access to symbolic resources (e.g. school rewards, certificates) serves to homogenise and assimilate multilingual children into monolingual ideologies by making them appear natural. In addition, this ‘homogenisation of all forms of communication’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p.45) contributes to the formation of a linguistic habitus or school identities which replicate the dominant monolingual ethos and culture of the school.

In my discussion of the data I have pointed out that the while communication in English is generally constructed as mandatory, standard forms of English are emphasised and have supreme value in the market place of the school classrooms. I have argued that classrooms, as linguistic markets are sites of possibilities and impossibilities, assign value to certain linguistic expressions, and define ‘what *cannot* be said as much as what *can*’ (Jenkins, 2002, p.153, emphasis in original) as well as *how* things can be said. The privileging of standard forms of English such as ‘big English words’ or proper vocabulary, register specific formulations and grammatically correct sentences serve as a gate-keeping mechanism to include and exclude learners. The analysis of my data reveals that learners who are able to display the right kind of English or perform the required school identities become counted among the most favoured and thus claim for themselves prized ‘good student’ identity positions which are normally accompanied by rewards. And those learners who are unable to produce the appropriate English expressions at the right time for this particular linguistic market are positioned as deviant or mediocre and simply remain at the periphery with very limited opportunities to participate in classroom activities. I have suggested that the process of rewarding learners’ actions through their English language use, and whether they have embodied the dominant monoglot language ideologies of the school or not, serves to produce and reproduce relations of power which positions learners differently in a system where English remains an unequally distributed resource.

In Chapter 7, the analysis shows that languages other than English are discursively constructed as having little importance, pushed into positions of weakness, and as a result rendered the most powerless within the institutional hierarchical ‘pecking order’ (Phillipson, 2001). I have argued that discourse formulations that are used to describe and talk about African languages such as ‘[learners] cannot pronounce things properly because of the influence of [African] languages’ (as in extract 38); as well as the

meaningless roles that these languages are allocated in mainstream classroom activities constructed them as languages which are barriers or obstacles to teaching and learning English, including the acquisition of a monolingual habitus that the school ultimately perpetuates. The data analysis further demonstrates that black multilingual children are socialised into the world-view that monolingual behaviour in English is 'normal' and that their own multilingualism or access to African languages is 'abnormal' (Foucault, 1977, 2003). In spite of that, the continued sidelining of languages other than English presents some paradoxes and dilemmas about how the children themselves take on the hegemonic monolingual ideologies of the school and act them out in their daily lives. I have illustrated through the description and interpretation of my data that the mixed discourses associated with African languages mediated children's views to develop particular orientations and meanings relating to these languages. In Chapter 7 I have mentioned the fact that Grade 1 children tend to monitor each other especially within the formal space of the classroom to report any use of African languages to the teachers. I have argued that this type of surveillance among children themselves demonstrates the extent to which they have been assimilated to believe that their own African languages are somewhat abnormal, and that 'doing school' is tantamount to 'doing English'.

On the other hand, I have suggested that the positioning of African languages provides spaces for certain kinds of language activities to happen and for certain understandings and orientations to emerge. In the face of the domination of English, learners are still able to navigate the highly monolingual setting to use other languages when teachers are out of sight. I have interpreted learners' ways of using African language especially in the midst of such domination as 'subversion' which thus exemplifies agency, albeit in very small ways. I have concluded that the way in which some children located themselves within the dominant monolingual discourses that they are subjected to at school, in order to insert African languages, shows that individuals can be agents in the construction of their own subjectivity. Considering the question of language surveillance in the previous paragraph and the use of African languages here, my analysis has illustrated that individuals can affirm, subvert, or make some choices however limited within the dominant discourses.

### 8.3 Contribution to Knowledge

I want to argue that the research findings have made a valuable contribution to the following broad areas: language discourses and ideologies in education, English in post-apartheid primary education in South Africa, and identity construction in multilingual school settings. While there has been research drawing attention to the overwhelming spread of English in post-apartheid South Africa (as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2) there is little research on the effects of such hegemony for learning and identity positions in early education, particularly in school contexts where English is a second, third or even fourth language to most of the learners. Much of the published research on the hegemony of English in education tends to focus on high schools and not on primary schooling experiences, as is the case of my study. The research findings in this thesis show that English, and the discourses that legitimate it, contribute to the privileging of learners who have embodied monolingual (English) dispositions and marginalise learners who do not conform to the monoglot standards that the school perpetuates. As part of the socialisation processes, the school rewards conformity, that is, those who are able to perform the valued English identities while excluding those who do not fit the norm. In relation to this, my thesis reveals the mismatch between the national Language in Education Policy (LiEP) which aims to promote multilingualism as a resource, the school's language policy as developed by the school in consultation with the parents, and the actual day to day language practices in the schools. In particular, my analysis has demonstrated that the dominant discourses of the school's language policy as well as the everyday cultural practices work to support the dominant position of English as *the* cultural capital at the expense of other languages that children have greater access to. In fact, African languages are devalued in day to day school practices. In this way the position of English as a superior language and its dominance over other languages is misrecognised (as in Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) as 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1977, 1980).

My thesis aims to provide a unique contribution to the literature on the processes of assimilation and integration in racially desegregated schooling. While early learning and schooling remains an under-researched area in South Africa, the limitation of other research on assimilation processes is that the findings are mainly drawn from survey questionnaires and interviews with staff and learners in high schools (see for example, Naidoo, 1996; Ntshakala, 1997; Soudien, 1998a, Vally and Dalamba, 1999).

The strength of the analysis in my study is that it is primarily based on classroom activities and practices, as well as a range of other types of data as I have discussed above. Through close and detailed analysis of classroom interactions, this thesis uncovers processes of linguistic assimilation through which young black multilingual children in a previously white school are 'apprenticed' into the dominant culture and become 'institutionalised'. The production of knowledge goes hand in hand with the assimilation processes which serve to legitimate monolingual behaviour in a multilingual setting. The valuing of English that children display in this study is an indicator of an emergence of an embodiment of a monolingual habitus which is consistent with the monolingual ethos of this former white institution.

My findings will also make a contribution to theories of the sociology of education and language reproduction in multilingual environments, following some of the international works of Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b, 1991; Gee, 1992, 1996; Giroux, 1983, 1997, 2001; Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996; to mention but a few. There is an absence of research in South Africa that attends to the issue of language through a framework that considers power relations and social inequality as a factor in analysis, particularly in schools that were previously designated for whites. Although this study focused on one school only, it illuminates the creation of the dominant culture in schools, particularly the way in which this monolingual culture (and monolingual habitus) is reinvented and perpetuated in education. As part of language and social reproduction processes, some cultural and linguistic conventions are constructed as high-status capital while others are repressed. Those who possess the appropriate forms of English cultural capital acquire special status and the power that goes with it. My data has demonstrated that the normalising of English is carried out through systems of surveillance and regulations which are 'inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching [and learning], not as additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency (Foucault, 1977, p.176). These systems include institutional discourses and ideologies which serve to naturalise the monolingual ethos. I concur with Fairclough's (1992b) conceptualisation of discourse as a 'mode of political and ideological practice':

discourse as a political practice establishes, sustains and changes power relations, and collective entities (classes, blocs, communities, groups) between which power relations obtain. Discourse as an ideological practice constitutes, naturalizes, sustains



and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relations (1992b, p.67).

In this way then, the English language politics in classrooms cannot be considered in isolation because they are part and parcel of the larger social and cultural world, particularly in transforming South Africa where issues of access and inequality are paramount, as my findings demonstrate. I have concluded that hegemonic ideological forces (that is, a combination of historical, social and political forces) enable the overwhelmingly dominant status or position of English in post-apartheid education in South Africa. Like a number of critical scholars (see for example, Apple, 1999, 2004; Blommaert, 1999; Corson, 1995; Freire, 1985; Gillborn, 1990, 1995; Pennycook, 1989, 1995; Tollefson, 1995, 2004) I argue against the widespread conservative perception that schools are, or at least should be seen as neutral, objective institutions. Clearly, this kind of understanding ‘overlooks important political issues regarding how canons are historically produced, whose interest they serve as well as whose they do not serve, and how they are sustained within specific forms of institutional power’ (Giroux, 1996, p.64).

#### **8.4 Future Research and Directions**

My discussion in this section focuses on the strengths and limitations of the study with the intention of proposing future directions for research which will build on and contribute to the findings of this study within South Africa and beyond.

The ethnographic approach and research methods used in this study enabled me to get an in-depth understanding of the language and cultural practices of a racially desegregated institution, during the post-apartheid era, and to gain insights into its monolingual ethos. I used a range of data including interviews with staff, learners’ tasks, audio and video recordings and the diversity of these materials provided me with an opportunity to analyse classroom interactions and activities in a unique manner. However, it was not possible to have individual interviews or small group discussion with the children. I believe that the discussions with children would have yielded interesting data and understandings about the children’s own perspectives with regard to the dominant cultural activities in year one of school, and would have further enriched the findings of my study. Moreover, tapping into the types of

discourses that children use to describe their own linguistic practices and how they position themselves within these discourses would have enhanced the study.

My qualitative study is small-scale, focusing only on two classrooms and, as a result, I cannot claim that the findings are representative of all the former-white English medium schools in South Africa. While it is impossible to generalise on the basis of the one school that I have used as my research site, this study sheds light on the prevalence of discourses that privilege monolingual ideologies and ethos through legitimising English as the natural language in early learning, especially in desegregated school settings that are diverse linguistically and culturally. I have argued that despite the liberal views of multilingualism and multiculturalism that are explicitly supported by post-apartheid policies, the cultural practices in former-white schools privilege English over other languages, and children become assimilated into the monoglot ideologies and cultural practices that resonate with the past apartheid era. Because research in early learning in South Africa has been heavily focused on describing the multiple modes of communication and learning (for example, Prinsloo and Stein, 2004; Stein 2003a, 2003b; Stein and Newfield, 2002) there is little classroom based research on the sociolinguistics of early schooling and the role of language in the production and reproduction of social differences and social inequalities; particularly in former white schools where there is now an influx of a predominantly black population of learners.

I see a role for further classroom based research which attends to the seeming tension between the homogenisation practices in previously segregated schools, and the linguistic and racial heterogeneity that we find in South African schools today. My research has implications for social justice issues as I have discussed in Chapter 1, particularly with regard to monolingual practices that prevail in multilingual settings and the extent to which these marginalise and stigmatise those who do not fit in with the dominant monoglot ideologies. I hope that my findings in this study will provide a basis for future research to develop analyses that address broader social and political issues to do with bilingual teaching and learning. My notion of a bilingual approach is premised on the understanding that both language accommodation and language awareness should become part and parcel of learning in school institutions. Such a bilingual project involves giving children access to English while valuing and drawing

on bi/multilingual knowledge that learners bring to class. As my study has shown, it would be naïve to advocate mother tongue education because the reality is that black parents want their children to learn in English as it is perceived as the language of access not only in South Africa, but globally as well. Given the current scenario, it seems likely that English will continue as the main language of teaching and learning (LoLT). Hence parents send their children to previously white English medium schools in the suburban areas which are often located far from their homes to get English education, instead of sending their children to township schools. The issue of previously white schools represents some ideological complexities that are deeply ingrained in South African society. In addition to the resources that they offer, these schools remain attractive to most parents because they are seen to provide a particular brand of English or better-quality English that will increase their children's job opportunities. Furthermore, parents believe that white English monolingual speakers, who are still in the majority in these schools, are better positioned to give their children access to 'standard English' as they see it. Considering these perceptions, it is perhaps understandable why schools such as Johannesburg Primary are dominated by English monolingual practices because that is what parents want. Teachers are caught at the intersection of classroom linguistic realities on the one hand, and parents' linguistic expectations and the pressures of English as a global language on the other. If bi/multilingual policy and practices are to mean anything to the majority of parents it appears that there is a need for a massive education programme to make them aware of the pedagogical advantages of learning English, while not excluding African languages.

The additive bilingual project that I am advocating aims to create spaces and conditions to allow the marginalised languages to surface, that is, allowing for meaningful and productive use of other sources of knowledge in the classroom in order to avoid tokenism as evidenced in this study. For instance, teaching and learning should promote bilingualism by encouraging children to draw on their language resources or 'funds of knowledge' (González *et al.*, 2005; Moll *et al.*, 1992) during mainstream classroom activities. In addition, teacher's code-switching skills can be utilised as legitimate classroom strategies to facilitate understanding and to support the acquisition of English, the LoLT. Such bi/multilingual classroom practices will provide both learners and teachers with an opportunity to explore learning bilingually

and to access academic content through the linguistic resources that children are already familiar with. Furthermore, it will offer the possibility for teachers and learners to acquire new linguistic resources. In this way then, teaching and learning will be about constructing a bi/multilingual habitus as opposed to a monolingual habitus.

Drawing on Hélot and Young (2006), it should be noted that my conceptualisation of the accommodation and awareness of languages is inclusive, aimed at *all* learners, and with the intent to accommodate learners' knowledge of different languages, and learners' cultures. Most importantly, this approach is not aimed at homogenising differences but it is about integrating languages. That is, the language awareness project should not be seen as something only designed for monolinguals or as a compensatory approach for the marginalised groups but rather should be about all learners being exposed to a multiplicity of languages. This will ensure and promote a non-assimilationist way of doing bi/multilingual teaching and learning.

Like Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) I suggest that schools as sites of reproduction can also be used to become sites of social and cultural transformation and empowerment. While the aim of my study is not about whether African languages should be used as media of instruction or not, I believe those languages can co-exist along with English and can be used in such a way that benefits teaching and learning. From this perspective then, different languages can be employed as resources without others being constructed as inherently weaker varieties as compared to the dominant language or as an impediment to the acquisition of English. Such learning involves tolerance between languages, awareness and acceptance of different languages in order to carve out spaces for multilingual ideologies, as well as bi/multilinguals as a resource in post-apartheid education.

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## Appendix 1: School – Letter of Permission

Date

Dear Mrs...

### **Request for permission to conduct research in Johannesburg Primary School**

We are writing to you as members of a team of researchers from the School of Literature and Language Studies at Wits University who are conducting a research project entitled: *Language, Identity and Learning: exploring language practices of children/youth attending desegregated schools in urban South Africa*. We would like permission to conduct this research in your school.

We hope to conduct research in four different schools in Johannesburg: one primary school and three secondary schools. We plan to collect common data across the four schools. In all four sites, data will be collected by focusing on one class. This class would be followed through one school day per week over a period of 3-4 months.

In the primary school we are interested in how learners language practices, oral storytelling and story reading activities as they occur in the normal school day. Thus the research will not make any changes to the existing school day programme and activities. In particular this part of the research aims to

- identify and document how learners' use language in both their school and social activities
- identify and document the kind of stories learners tell at school and how they tell these stories
- explore the relationship between language use, oral stories and story reading activities and how these impact on their identities and
- determine the implications of these relations for language, literacy and identity development at the early years.

As part of the project we would like to video record some of the classes to be observed. This would be arranged with the teacher to find out when s/he intends to use storytelling in the class. The data collected will be discussed with the teacher. At no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identities of any of its staff and the identities of any learners be identified. The school and any research subjects referred to will be given pseudonyms. Video footage will not be shown in any public forum. It will be used entirely for research purposes and viewed only by researchers.

We would be happy to answer any questions relating to the proposed research project and to address the SGB if necessary.

If you are willing to grant permission for the research to be conducted in your school, please sign in the space below.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader  
Signature.....

Pinky Makoe  
Researcher  
Signature.....

The signature below grants permission for the abovementioned research to be carried out at this school.

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Principal

-----  
Date



## Appendix 2: Parents – Letter of Permission

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian

### **Request for permission to video record your child in Grade 1**

I am Pinky Makoe and am writing to you as one of the researchers from the School of Literature and Language Studies at Wits University who are conducting a research project entitled: *Language, Identity and Learning: exploring language practices of children/youth attending desegregated schools in urban South Africa*. We would like permission to video-record your child in grade 1.

The research involves four different schools in Johannesburg: one primary school and three secondary schools. In this project we are looking at how learners use language in and outside of the classroom, for example, what languages they use when and whether they mix languages or not. In the primary school we are particularly interested in how learners use language, oral storytelling and story reading activities.

The researcher will spend a day or two at your child's school, from the start to the end of the school day. The normal school day activities will not be interrupted in any way. The researcher will spend the day sitting at the back of the Grade 1 class observing what goes on. On some occasions the class will be video-recorded. These recordings will only be used for research purposes and will not be viewed by anybody apart from the Wits University researchers on the project.

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish your child to participate he/she will not be disadvantaged in any way. We will not look at his/her language use for the research. If you do allow your child to participate you may withdraw at any point.

The name of your child will not be recorded and used in any way. S/he will be given a false name (pseudonym) in the research.

We would be happy to answer any further question regarding the proposed research project.

Please sign below to indicate whether you grant permission or not.

I,..... (full name) give permission for my child  
.....to be video-recorded as part of the research  
project.

Signature.....

Date.....

I,.....(full name) do not give permission for my child  
.....to be video-recorded as part of the research project.

Signature.....

Date.....

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

Signature.....

Researcher

Pinky Makoe

Signature:.....